



قَالَ لَا تَحْبُصُوا خُبْرًا
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The Eucharist of the Risen Lord

വിണ്ണിൻനായകനാം തൻനാമരഹസ്യങ്ങളായ്
 മണ്ണിൻ വിളവുകൾ പട്ടക്കാർ കാഴ്ചയണച്ചു
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THE MYSTERY OF FAITH

The Eucharist is the very heart of the Christian life. It is the specifically Christian action. Like the Church itself, of which it is the summary and sign, it is a profound mystery. It uses the gestures and language of humanity, but cannot be contained in purely human categories. Any study of the Eucharist must therefore respect not only the theology of the Eucharist but also the faith, which gives its fullest meaning to that theology. We must approach our study of this great mystery with humility and reverence. Like the other sacraments, the Eucharist is a sacrament of faith. It is celebrated within the context of faith. The Eucharist is not a magical rite. It requires the intervention of the Holy Spirit. Without this intervention, there would be only human ritual.

The Church, Sacrament of Christ

A clear sacramental structure can be detected in the Church, who is "like a sacrament, that is, a sign and a means of intimate union with God (Vatican II; LG 1; cf.9). The strength of the Father's saving love, incarnate in Christ, is rendered now present in the Church. Consequently, this sacramental nature of the Church flows necessarily from the sacramental structure of Christ. Just as Christ is the sacrament of the father's love, so also the Church is the sacrament of Christ's love. For she is

certainly an external sign, visible and manifest (this is her institutional, hierarchical and organizational aspect). And she is at the same time an efficacious sign, endowed in a permanent manner with the saving power of the Risen Lord and his sanctifying Spirit (and this is her internal, mystical aspect). In the Church therefore the sign-value cannot be dissociated from her internal efficacy, for these two realities, though distinct, are absolutely inseparable and both make up of one single body (cf. Vatican II, LG8). God's saving love, which had already become Christic at the incarnation with a certain sacramental structure, becomes now ecclesial without losing anything of that sacramental structure, which will be present in the seven sacraments.

The individuals who constitute the People of God are to be saved in their concrete, existential situations. Each individual is caught up in that salvific torrent of God's saving mercy now in the sacrament, for the merciful God saves us in Christ and in his Church through the instrumentality of the sacraments.

The Excellence of Eucharist

Yet the seven sacraments do not all have the same intrinsic value and worth. The Eucharist exceeds all the rest (CF 1516-1518). For the Eucharist can rightly be said to be the sacramental memorial of the entire work of Redemption.

1. First of all, it looks at the past, at Christ's sacrificial saving act, unique and unrepeatable, but handed over to the Church to be repeated, in the sacramental form till the end of time. The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection.
2. But Christ, the sacrament of the Father, is rendered, present in the Church under the form of bread and wine, here and now. It is the Risen Christ, substantially present in the sacramental representation of the past Paschal Mystery.
3. At the same time, this very eucharistic presence of Christ, which recapitulates past and present, points to the future, to the Church's eschatological completion. For the Christ present is not the suffering, but emphatically the glorified Christ in the midst of his eschatological glory. Whenever the Eucharist is celebrated, a kind of epiphany of the glory of Christ and a guarantee of the Church's final glorification take place.

Therefore the Church believes in the past saving Event, now rendered sacramentally present. She loves the eucharistic Christ, present in her midst; and hopes for the final manifestation of her own glory. The eucharistic mystery is really "like the centre of the Christian religion" (Pius XII).

The excellence of the Eucharist over the other Sacraments (CF 1516) is also seen from its deeply ecclesial dimension. For the Eucharist is essentially the renewal of the New Covenant, which unites the People to their God, a Covenant that is, sealed, by the Son's own blood. The Eucharist therefore strengthens the link of union between the Church and the God who promises salvation. At the eucharistic celebration the hierarchical structure of the Church is manifested with the ministerial priest and the faithful exercising each his own distinctive function in the totality of the ecclesial eucharistic offering. Given the intrinsic nature of the sacrifice and its sign-value, it is the Church that offers herself to the Father, together with the Risen Kyrios. As broad, and all-embracing is the aspect of the fruits of the memorial sacrifice, which extend,

far and wide to the entire Church and even beyond her borders, to the whole world. All these rich fruits flow from its centre, the glorified eucharistic Christ.

Finally, the same ecclesial dimension is perceptible in the deepest effect of the Eucharist, which is the increase in the already existing unity of the People of God. Rightly has the Eucharist been called, 'the sacrament of unity' (Augustine). The ecumenical unity of all Christians will, one day, be the supreme fruit of the Eucharist. This ecclesial dimension is more prominently visible in the Eucharist than in the other sacraments.

The central meaning of the Eucharist is already conveyed by the etymology of the term "Eucharistia", which derives from the "thanksgiving" used by Jesus at the Last Supper (cf. Institution texts below). The English 'thanksgiving' does not quite convey the deep meaning of the term, for in the Eucharist the attention is focussed not only on the psychological disposition of the person but also, and mainly, on the object that elicits that disposition. Hence the word should embrace both the aspects, subjective and objective. It simply means: "to praise and give thanks for a gift received", or, more fully, "the Eucharist is the actualising of the salvific reality 'Jesus' through the words of thanksgiving uttered over the bread and wine" (Betz).

This actualisation of the work of Jesus is and will always remain a mystery, not a rational dispute subject to the vague impressions of the human mind. A reflection on the revealed datum, no matter how deep and thorough, will never be able to dispel the intrinsic obscurity of the Eucharist. Not only the fact of the real presence, but also -and especially- the dimensions of memorial and sacrifice will always elude the full grasp of the inquiring human mind. For the Eucharist is part of revelation, and revelation is to be received in the humble obscurity of faith, rather than in the triumphant splendours of the vision. It is the eschatological glory of Christ that is present in the Eucharist, but always apprehended through the veil of faith. The Eucharist will always remain a 'mysterium fidei'.

Ecumenical Interest

The 1970s have witnessed a remarkable proliferation of ecumenical eucharistic agreements between the various Christian churches even in delicate areas which in the past had proved resistant to any mutual reconciliation: agreed statements by Anglicans and Catholics (1971), by Lutherans, Calvinists and Catholics (1972), by the World Council of Churches (1975), by Lutherans and Catholics (1978), etc. A complete agreement on the Eucharist between the various churches has not yet been reached, but the gap of separation is rapidly closing up. Consequently any modern treatment of the Eucharist must keep these new developments in mind, not primarily because of a legitimate concern with the historical past, but rather as a preparation for a final reconciliation that lies in the future.

The day seems to be approaching when the Eucharist will cease to be a sacrament of division and become once again what it was always meant to be the sign and source of Christian unity.

Pastoral Orientation

The general orientation of the treatise will be eminently pastoral. For the priest, in his pastoral life, is not primarily a defender of the truth, but a steward entrusted with the mysteries of God (1 Cor 4,1), a minister of reconciliation (2 Cor

5,18); and the faithful will not ask for technical proofs, but rather for a positive, dispassionate exposition of the riches contained in Revelation. For this Revelation is not primarily meant to be defended, but to be given out, to be imparted (cf. OT n. 16); and the priest is, not primarily a theologian but a shepherd of the faithful. "One should have recourse to a way of presenting things more in keeping with a teaching particularly pastoral in character" (Paul VI: Address at second sess. Vat II, 29 Sept. 1963).

This obviously demands a change in terminology.

We need to examine whether our manner of expression contains statements or ways of saying things difficult for non-Catholics to understand. An abstract and purely intellectual manner of speech... is not understood by Orientals. On the other hand a biblical and patristic manner of speech by itself would avoid and should prevent many difficulties, prejudices and confusions" (Bishop De Smedt, 1st sess. Vat. II, 29 Nov. 1962).

And Vatican II is emphatic: "Catholic belief needs to be explained, more profoundly and precisely in ways and in terminology which our separated brethren too can really understand" (UR n. 11). All this implies a prudent, yet courageous readiness to alter and modify a terminological approach perhaps of long standing but which now, with the passage of time, has become unsuitable or hardly understandable.

Not only the terminology used, but also the thought-pattern of the past may have to be changed. Immutability of revealed truth does not imply a similar immutability of the conceptual patterns in which that truth is expressed. "The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way it is expressed, is another. And it is the latter that must be taken into great consideration..." (John XXIII, 1st sess. Vat II, 1962). But the replacement of unsuitable thought-patterns necessarily demands and presupposes the previous, delicate task of detecting with certainty an immutable dogma of faith and distinguishing it from its mutable, historical manifestations. The enterprise is threatened by a double danger, that of an excessively rigid adherence to the past, under the cover of fidelity; and that of an over-adaptation which, under the pretence of pastoral adaptability, throws out the "baby along with the bath-water."

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THE MEMORIAL OF CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION

At the Last Supper, on the night when he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the centuries until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity,(16) a paschal banquet in which Christ is eaten, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us. (SC 47)

The extraordinary richness of the Eucharistic mystery cannot possibly be conveyed by one single term. The Eucharist is a many-faceted reality that overflows our conceptual expressions, which will always remain necessarily partial and will therefore fall short of the complete Eucharistic reality. Our inability to grasp and express comprehensively the fullness of the mystery accounts for the plurality of names that are usually attached to it by the various Christian denominations. All these ways of speaking are certainly correct, but all of them are limited and none is perfect, for none is able to express the plenitude contained in the Eucharist.

The description of the Eucharist as a memorial of Christ's death and resurrection will probably sound to some as dangerously close to the Protestant conception. For, after all, it is not so long ago that Pope Pius XII in the encyclical *Mediator Dei* (1947) gave the Catholic Church a theologically comprehensive description of the eucharistic mystery, but —significantly and as a typical reflection of the mentality of the times — insisted emphatically on the sacrificial nature of the eucharistic celebration, with only a passing glance at the memorial aspect. It was Vatican II that definitely changed these perspectives. While acknowledging the legitimacy of the previous approach centered on sacrifice, the Council welcomed a return to the strongly biblical conception of the memorial. Consequently, Catholics at present need not feel uneasy, as if this way of conceiving and explaining the Eucharist were a betrayal of a cherished Catholic tradition.

We are definitely not abandoning that tradition, far from it; we are only making a fresh attempt, in keeping with the directives of Vatican II, to express the mystery in categories that are no less traditional, even if they had been unfortunately neglected by Catholic theology for centuries. We are not thereby yielding to subtle Protestant pressure; we are only making an honest attempt to be more faithful to the word of God and in the process trying to come closer to the heart of the Eucharist.

Our traditional Catholic insistence on the dimension of sacrifice to the almost complete neglect of the aspect of memorial has had in some cases the unfortunate consequence of glorifying excessively the Mass by placing it almost on a par with Jesus' historical sacrifice on Calvary. The Mass is in no way a repetition of that sacrifice, which stands supreme in its uniqueness. The Mass is only the memorial, but is a very rich memorial, of that unique and unrepeatable sacrifice. It is this memorial approach that will bring out at once the intrinsic excellence as well as the unavoidable limitations of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

1 — THE PASSOVER BLESSING

The key term *anamnesis*, variously rendered in English as 'remembrance', 'memorial' or 'memory', occurs thrice in the institution narratives (Lk 22,19; 1 Cor 11,24-25). "Do this as a memorial of me". What did Jesus mean by this? The formula is so incredibly dense, so utterly brief and almost cryptic, that its real meaning and theological import are not immediately clear. And yet, the significance of the expression is buried deep in the Bible itself, for the concept of the memorial is typically Hebrew.

The Jewish *berakah* was the long central blessing that, in keeping with the prescribed liturgy, the head of the family or group of friends had to pronounce in the course of the Passover meal, sandwiched between the other two, much shorter blessings over the unleavened bread and the third cup. The *berakah* opened up with a joyous hymn of praise to Yahweh, a real blessing to God, which eventually gave its name to the entire prayer. It was short and stereotyped in form, an enthusiastic invitation to divine praise. This was followed by the explicit declaration of the motive or reason for the assembly's praises. The motive was always one of the salvific wonders wrought by God in favour of his People, particularly their deliverance from Egypt and God's subsequent providential care before their settlement in the Promised Land. The memory of these past salvific events aroused in them a profound sense of admiration and wonder, of marveling joy coupled with gratitude. This is the central part of the blessing; it is the memorial or remembrance of the salvific wonders performed by God. It is a real commemoration in which the past event becomes symbolically present here and now, laden with its entire saving efficacy.

It is "a veritable kerygmatic annunciation to the assembly that this same *mirabile* (wonder) is present here, active now, accomplishing still its purpose within the life of each and every member of the worshipping people". The aspect of joyful gratitude, therefore, and perhaps even more, the marveling joy that pervades the entire blessing express the heart of the memorial. The central part of the blessing is concluded by a final doxology, which in reality is, but a return to the initial motif of praise, differently coloured according to the various themes commemorated in the memorial. Hence, the Jewish *berakah* is not an act directed primarily to the material elements present on the table for the celebration (bread and wine), but rather to God. It is an act of worship, steeped in a general, enveloping atmosphere of grateful, joyful wonder and enthusiastic praise to God for his saving intervention in the history of his People.

2 — THE NON-EUCHARISTIC MEMORIAL

The Jewish *berakah* or blessing then offers us the liturgical setting of the memorial, which is framed by an initial invitation to praise, and a concluding doxology in which the same note of grateful praise is struck again. Yet it would be wrong to assume that the solemn Passover meal is the only instance of biblical memorial. Both the Old as well as the New Testament are like a plentiful mine of rich materials connected with the notion of memorial. We have only to painstakingly extract the solid chunk of marble from this multicolored mine which is the Bible, in order to discern the real meaning and salvific import of this rich concept of memorial which should not be restricted to the Eucharist. Its non-eucharistic usage will determine how it should be understood when it occurs within a eucharistic context.

The history of the Flood at the time of Noah, as narrated in Genesis, supplies us with the first case of a real memorial. When the waters of the Flood subside, God blesses Noah: "Behold I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you. I will remember my covenant, which is between you and me.... When the bow is in the clouds I will look upon it and remember the everlasting covenant..." (Gen 9,9-17). God will remember his covenant, namely, the sight of the rainbow will be like a reminder to him, a periodically recurring memorial that his covenant with Noah and his posterity must stand firm.

The Jewish Passover itself, which is the immediate background to the Last Supper, offers us another case of biblical memorial. In reference to the Passover, the Lord said, "This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast" (Ex 12,14). In the course of the celebration not only are the worshippers reminded of Yahweh's merciful, repeated interventions in their lives, but—surprisingly—God himself is reminded, namely, his past promises are brought before him that he may always remember them. The solemn blessing after the Passover meal included the following prayer: "Our God and God of our fathers, on this day of the festival of *matzoth* may there come you the remembrance of us and our fathers, of Jerusalem your holy city, of the Messiah son of David your servant.... Eternal God, remember us this day for happiness" The act of reminding Yahweh, of holding him to his salvific promises, may sound strange to us, but it is perfectly normal for the Hebrew mind. Moses prays to God, "Remember Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, your servants, to whom you swore by yourself and made this promise.... I will make your offspring as many as the stars in heaven" (Ex 32,13). The psalmist too prays in the same vein: "Yahweh, remember David and all the hardships he endured..." (Ps 132,1). The divine promises are constantly being placed before the Lord as a reminder to him.

On the other hand, the feast of the Unleavened Bread, which is part of the Passover celebrations, is also a memorial, a reminder, not however to God, but rather to the People: "Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days.... It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt. . . .And it shall be to you . . . as a memorial between your eyes" (Ex 13,7-9).

The Jewish liturgy witnessed the weekly replacement on the altar of twelve loaves of bread, the so-called showbread, accompanied by the following prayer: "And you shall put pure frankincense with each row (of loaves), that it may go with the bread as a memorial portion to be offered by fire to the Lord. Every Sabbath day Aaron shall set it in order before the Lord . . . as a covenant forever" (Lev 24,7-8). These weekly loaves, therefore, were like a continual reminder placed before the Lord that he might not forget his promises.

A couple of instances will show that exactly the same meaning is kept up in the New Testament too. Luke narrates that Cornelius, the Roman centurion, was "a devout man who feared God . . . and prayed constantly to God" (Acts 10,3). Quite unexpectedly one day he receives the vision of an angel who comes to him with the message: "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial to the Lord" (Acts 10,4). This sounds almost like an echo of the Jewish liturgy referred to in Lev 2,2: "... and the priest shall burn this as its memorial portion upon the altar, an offering by fire, a pleasing odour to the Lord". Like the sacrifice of old, so also the righteous ethical behaviour of Cornelius and his constant prayer have ascended like a cloud of incense before the throne of God, as a memorial to him that he may never forget the

goodness of the Roman centurion. Cornelius' upright life is a real memorial before the Lord, for "your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God" (Acts 10,31).

The second case concerns Jesus himself. After being anointed by the sinful woman, Jesus solemnly declares: "Wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her" (Mk 14,9). This memory or memorial is probably to be placed within the setting of a liturgical offering. It does not mean that her memory will in future be preserved and her act recounted to future generations, but rather that her costly offering to the Lord will ascend to him like a memorial, like a prayer of incense. It is not subjective memory but rather objectified memorial, primarily directed, not to men but to God, who will not forget her. In the opinion of J. Jeremias, "Mark 14,9 . . . 'in memory of her', in all probability relates to the merciful remembrances of God: 'that God may (mercifully) remember her'".

Paul often prays for his Christians, his petitionary prayer for them ascends to God like a memorial. For instance, he writes to the Thessalonians: "We always mention you in our prayers... and constantly remember before God our Father how you have shown your faith" (1 Thes 1,2-3). Paul and Timothy bring before God as an objectified memorial, the faith and love of their Christians. The strength and constancy of the Thessalonians become the object of Paul's memorial, the content of his thanksgiving to God and especially of his intercession for them, that God may continue to be merciful to them.

The sum total of all the above is that the memorial is a dynamic movement in two directions: it is a reminder to the People of God's unshakable fidelity to his salvific promises and this produces in the People a sense of profound gratitude for favours received. And the memorial is also a reminder sent to God, that he should not forget his promises in the future, and although a reminder to God may strike us as something fanciful and totally unnecessary, since he is not likely to forget what he has himself promised, yet what actually lies under the anthropomorphic expression of a reminder is nothing but a petition, a supplication, a request for further favours. And so, joining both the dimensions together, the biblical memorial emerges as a double reminder, to the People and to God, which respectively produces gratitude and expresses supplication. Gratitude and supplication, therefore, constitute the core of the biblical memorial.

When the memorial is directed to God, it acquires the form of a double action, for on the one hand something is brought before God as a reminder to him. The reminder is not only — and perhaps not even primarily — a prayer, but rather an action; it is a petition embodied in an action. So, for instance, the showbread is laid before the eyes of the Lord (Lev 24,7), the prayers of the righteous are brought before God (Enoch 99,3), Cornelius' alms and prayers are sent to God as a memorial. In all these cases God is reminded, not through a prayer but through an action. The People's supplication takes the form of something brought before God.

On the other hand, the memorial is also a supplication to God that he may act. The worshipping community, through the celebration of the memorial, asks God for an efficacious intervention. The community acts before God so that God may act for the community. The worshippers bring something before God as an implicit request that he may act — mercifully or punishingly. For instance, it is said that God does not remember sin (Jer 31, 23), but he will remember the iniquities of Babylon (Apoc

18,5): it means, respectively, that God will forgive the sinner and punish Babylon. "God's remembrance is always an action" (J. Jeremias: *The Eucharistic Words*, p. 249). The memorial, therefore, designates an active presentation before God intended to induce him to act.

This being the theological content of the biblical memorial, we are now in a position to understand the import of the command issued by Jesus at the end of the Last Supper, immediately after the first Eucharistic celebration, when he asked his disciples to repeat as a memorial of him the same action he had just performed.

3 — "DO THIS AS A MEMORIAL OF ME"

After having briefly examined the content of the biblical memorial, let us now return to the Eucharist. What did Jesus mean by this brief expression? He was asking the infant Church around the table to celebrate the Eucharistic mystery as a memorial of him, and in the light of the above this Eucharistic memorial emerges as the memorial of the Son offered to the Father by the Church.

It is a memorial of the Son. "Do this as a memorial of me", that is to say, the Eucharistic celebration is a reminder, a supplication sent to the Father that he may remember his Son who died and was raised for the Church. The worshipping community, in the presence of the Father, appeals to the entire life of Jesus, but especially to his death and glorification, that in virtue of what he did, God may continue to be merciful to the Church. This supplication is included in the usual expression of remembrance or reminder sent to God. The literary form of a reminder may sound childish, but the content of supplication it covers is definitely not. The Church is humbly beseeching God that, because of his Son ("in memory of me"), the Father may continue pouring out his graces on the pilgrim People of God. This attitude of remembrance that covers a request is profoundly biblical, for a petition that Yahweh may remember the Messiah was already expressed in an ancient Passover prayer: "God of our fathers, may there arise and come ...be seen, accepted, heard, recollected and remembered... the remembrance of the Messiah" (N. Goldberg, *Passover Haggadah*, p. 30).

It is specifically the memorial of Jesus' death and *resurrection* that is brought, through a liturgical action, before the Father. Gone is the time when even official Church documents used to refer to the Mass as a memorial of Christ's death without the slightest reference to his resurrection. The entirety of the paschal mystery embraces both death and resurrection in an unbreakable unity, and it would be a deplorable distortion of the redemption to overstress one-sidedly the aspect of death to the neglect of his glorification. Jesus did not redeem mankind simply by dying, but rather by dying and rising from the dead. Any consideration of the Eucharistic memorial that narrowly concentrates on and reminds the Father of Good Friday with the exclusion of Easter Sunday would be totally unacceptable. Rightly therefore Vatican II states in the document on the Liturgy that Christ decided, "to entrust to his beloved spouse, the Church, the memorial of his death and resurrection".¹

¹ Constitution on the Liturgy, n. 47. Here Vatican II was quietly correcting the imperfect formula used by Pope Pius XII in his encyclical *Mediator Dei* (1947), which described the Eucharist as "a memorial of his death" (n. 74).

Even after the completion of Christ's paschal mystery, however, this supplication in a way continues, for the Eucharist is to be celebrated "until he comes" (1 Cor 11,26). The Church is grateful to God for having sent his Son once, and now, gathered around the altar, she beseeches God to send him again. It seems to be almost an indirect allusion to the *Maranatha* with which the early Christian community prayed longingly for the final, definitive coming of the Lord.

Hence, the death and glorification of Jesus are proclaimed at every Eucharistic celebration as an event of the past that has yet to be brought to its fulfillment in the future. And so the entire life of Jesus is recapitulated and brought before the Father by the praying Church in order to induce him to act, namely, to bring to completion the unfulfilled work of redemption. The very remembrance of the past (death and resurrection of Christ) thrusts the Church forward in a movement of longing anticipation towards the unfulfilled climax of her complete, final liberation. The fullness of the Eucharistic memorial looks simultaneously backward and forward, to the past and to the future, to Calvary and to the Parousia. All this enormous wealth of meaning is encapsulated in that pithy expression, "...as a memorial of me." The community, by means of her Eucharistic action, reminds and petitions the Father to continue blessing the Church that he loves. The memorial becomes an earnest entreaty, a humble supplication, and an ardent appeal to the work of Christ, before the Father, for the benefit of the Church.

In entreating God for her own future, the Church remembers also her past, and this 'flashback', this calling back to mind her own salvation gratuitously and lovingly bestowed on her by the suffering and risen Christ issues forth into a movement of deep gratitude. If the Eucharistic repetition of what Jesus did at the Supper, the celebration "as a memorial of me," induces the Church to an act of supplication before God, the same celebration prompts her also to an unceasing act of thanksgiving, a real '*eucharistia*.' Thanksgiving and supplication are inextricably bound together; they cannot possibly be dissociated, for both these dimensions belong to the core and kernel of the memorial.

Supplication and thanksgiving are the two essential attitudes of the Church, who simultaneously utters a deeply felt 'thank you' for the past and a hopeful 'please' for the future. If memories of the past induce her to thank God, the vivid consciousness of her own needs impels her to ask for the future. The entire life of the Church, past, present and future, is concentrated in the Eucharistic memorial.

Most Christians imagine that the centre of the Eucharist is Jesus, but in this they are badly mistaken. Jesus undoubtedly plays an absolutely essential role in the Eucharistic celebration, but this narrow concentration on his person seems to be the result of an unwarranted restriction of the Eucharist exclusively to the aspect of the real presence. Apparently this is the only dimension of the Eucharistic reality that many people know, and this is certainly unfortunate. If, besides holding firmly to the doctrine of the real presence, they had understood and assimilated the content — theologically so profound and spiritually so enriching — of the Eucharistic memorial, maybe this partial distortion would have been avoided.

The entire Eucharistic action is not addressed to Jesus, but to his Father, for it is the Father who is reminded of the salvific work performed by the Son. The memorial is an essential movement directed to the person of the Father, who is simultaneously thanked for the past and entreated for the future. The entire

Eucharistic thrust is directed towards the Father, rather than towards Jesus. The one who is reminded and asked to act is Jesus' Father and our Father, for it is exclusively to him that the double movement of the memorial, thanksgiving and supplication, is directed. The Church reminds the Father, thanks and requests him to continue the work of redemption which is not yet entirely fulfilled, not because Christ's work was in any way incomplete, but rather because the immeasurable fullness of his life, death and resurrection is not yet entirely assimilated by the pilgrim Church. The work of redemption remains incomplete, not because of Jesus but because of the Church. It is not he but she that has a long way to go yet, trying to assimilate within herself the wealth of redemption initiated by the Father and accomplished by Christ. Since the Eucharist, from the viewpoint of the memorial, is directed to the Father, the unavoidable conclusion should be that the Eucharistic memorial is a theocentric rather than a christocentric action.

In spite of all that has preceded it is more than likely that the concept of memorial, when applied to the Eucharist, will leave people unsatisfied, for to reduce the mystery of the Eucharist to a reminder sent to the Father seems at first sight to equate it with an exercise of mere subjective remembrance. The Eucharistic memorial is not only a subjective remembrance of events of the past, but also an objective actualization of the work of our redemption. It does not take place in the subjective realm, in the psychological memory of the celebrating congregation, but in the objective sacramental order, where the Church brings forth before the Father, in an action immersed with joyful gratitude and expectant supplication, the salvation accomplished by Christ. It goes far beyond the subjective memory of a past event. For, in reality this event becomes sacramentally present in the liturgical action, laden with its intrinsic efficacy and full salvific content. The Church, through the memorial, is directly connected with the very climax of Jesus' life, with his death and resurrection, now rendered present on the altar through sacramental signs. The flimsy character of a merely psychological remembrance yields to the marvellous density of a past salvific event rendered sacramentally present here and now.

Furthermore, it is not only the saving event of the past that becomes sacramentally present. The very person of the glorified Jesus, permanently transfigured, is also rendered objectively present in the midst of the memorial. The congregation is not merely thinking of a person who died and rose in the distant past, whose memory is kept artificially alive through a psychological device; rather Jesus himself becomes sacramentally present under bread and wine, imparting to the liturgical action a density that goes well beyond the realm of subjective memory. His presence is detectable only through faith, but with the eyes of faith we do perceive the presence of the Resurrected, who envelops the entire liturgical action as well as the worshipping congregation. Jesus is alive and active in the midst of the community. Consequently, the Eucharistic memorial bursts the constrictions of a merely subjective remembrance by means of a double presence: that of the unique event of the redemption and that of the person himself of the redeemer.

Not only are redemption and redeemer rendered sacramentally present here and now, but the saving effects of the past too flow now into the present. The salvific action itself— the work of human redemption — lies in the distant past, untouchable in its uniqueness and unrepeatable in its majestic grandeur, but streams of grace and salvation flow out of it and pour down into the present. Now, in the Eucharistic

memorial, we are drawn into the torrent of salvation, soaked in its vivifying effects, plunged into Christ's paschal mystery. The R. Catholic/Lutheran Joint Commission has put it beautifully: in the memorial "the Lord calls his People into his presence and confronts them with his salvation. In this creative act of God the salvation events of the past become the offer of salvation for the present and the promise of salvation for the future".² This is the incredible wealth of meaning contained in Jesus' command at the end of the Supper, "Do this as a memorial of me."

4 — A THEOLOGICAL TRIPTYCH

We are now confronted with a real triptych or triangle, with three distinct realities whose inner connections are not obviously clear. We readily accept that our present Eucharist is somehow linked with both the Supper and the paschal mystery, but how are these three events interrelated? How does the death and resurrection of Christ connect with the Supper, on the one hand, and with the Eucharist of today, on the other? A firm and clear grasp of this theological triptych is necessary if we are to avoid possible misunderstandings and inaccurate conceptions.

It is obvious that the Supper chronologically preceded the cross-resurrection, and this is the reason why the Supper cannot in any way be called the memorial of the cross, for the memorial always and necessarily commemorates something, which has already taken place previously. When Jesus instituted the Eucharist his death and glorification lay still in the future and could not, therefore, be commemorated at the Supper. Yet this is not to deny that the Supper is intimately linked to the cross. Without the salvific reality of the cross-resurrection (Calvary, for short), the Supper would not stand; it would be entirely devoid of all sacrificial value. The Supper, as sacrifice, depends on the cross absolutely, but this dependence is one-sided and non-mutual, for it is the Eucharist that depends on Calvary, not the other way around. Calvary would stand supreme without the Supper, but the Supper without Calvary would disintegrate instantly, it would be left hanging in midair, meaningless and unsupported. Both of them are undoubtedly sacrifices, but they belong to two different realms, respectively historical or empirical (Calvary) and sacramental (Supper). The Supper anticipates the cross in the sacramental order and as such it can be repeated, whereas Calvary remains supreme, unique and unrepeatable, alone in its majestic solitude. The Supper is not coordinated with but rather essentially subordinated to, the cross-resurrection, from which it draws all its value and intrinsic worth. Obviously the Supper does not reenact or reproduce the cross. Calvary has no duplicates.

The *Qurbano* of today is not the memorial of the Supper, but rather its reproduction, its repetition. The *Qurbano* is the memorial of Calvary, not of the Supper, and the *Qurbano* is the reenactment of the Supper, not of Calvary. At the end of the Supper Jesus enjoined on the Church the command to do what he had done, as the memorial of his death and resurrection, and the result is today's *Qurbano*. Yet, despite this substantial identity between the Supper and the *Qurbano*, the latter is not a carbon copy of the former, for several differences between the two stand out clearly.

² The Eucharist, n. 36: One in Christ 15 (1979), p. 260

Whereas at the Supper Christ was still subject to death and as yet unglorified, now he is risen, free from the clutches of death forever. Similarly, the person of the offerer in both the Supper and the *Qurbano* is the same, Jesus who offered himself to his Father at the Supper and who continues to offer himself at the *Qurbano*. Now, however, he does not do it directly as he did in the upper room but rather through the intermediate ministry of the Church to whom he committed his own sacrifice. At the Supper the Church (that is, the Twelve) was only the beneficiary of the new sacrifice, not its co-offerer. There the only offerer was Christ, with the Church at the receiving end, as the recipient of the sacrifice itself, made over to her as a gift. On that occasion she did not co-offer the sacrifice in any way, not even in a subordinate role, whereas now, at the *Qurbano*, she is the real offerer, besides being the partial victim along with Christ.

Despite these dissimilarities, however, one is bound to acknowledge that there is no substantial difference between what Jesus did alone at the Supper and what he does today through the instrumentality of the Church. We go on repeating the Supper and commemorating Calvary "until he comes". There is no shortcut connecting the *Qurbano* directly with Calvary; the *Qurbano* links up with Calvary only by reproducing the Supper, not independently of it. The Supper, therefore, remains absolutely essential for a correct understanding and accurate formulation of the Eucharistic mystery.

THE EUCHARIST IS A SACRIFICIAL MEMORIAL

The Eucharist is undoubtedly a memorial, but it is not only a memorial, it is specifically a Sacrificial Memorial. The various approaches that together make up the fullness of the Eucharist should not be associated or even artificially juxtaposed but rather linked up by their internal unity. The Eucharist, for example, is not a memorial and also a sacrifice; it is rather a Sacrificial Memorial.

The Eucharistic memorial of the Lord is a sacrifice because its content is profoundly sacrificial. We commemorate the death and resurrection of Christ and this salvific event is not only sacrificial, it is the sacrifice par excellence. The sacrificial character of the paschal mystery is like a torrent that, welling up on Calvary, flows down and floods the entire Eucharistic celebration. We commemorate in the Eucharist the sacrifice of the death and resurrection of Jesus and therefore the liturgical celebration itself becomes essentially sacrificial.

The memorial goes up to the Lord in an ascending sacrificial movement. Memorial and sacrifice are inextricably bound together. Ultimately, it would seem, the Eucharist is a sacrifice because it is a memorial, rather than the other way around. It is not the sacrifice that produces the memorial, but the memorial that begets the sacrifice. The memorial is the root and the sacrifice is the fruit.

The Eucharistic Mystery in the Scripture

The mystery of the Eucharist is the sacramental representation of the sacrifice of Christ. It is the liturgical celebration of the new covenant, which God established with his people in the mystery of Christ's sacrificial Passover unto the Father. Its context is the new covenant; its content is the sacramental celebration of the new covenant in the sacrificial meal.

Old Testament Background

1. The Passover

In Israel, every meal is endowed with a certain sacred character (1 Sam 14,31-35) and conversely, every solemn religious action in orthodox Yahwism is accompanied by a sacred meal (1 Sam 9,12). Every sacred meal served to strengthen and confirm God's covenant with the table guests. Moses and the elders had eaten and drunk in the presence of God (Ex 24,11); Saul partakes of a sacred meal with Samuel (1 Sam 9,22). The Levitic priests share in the shewbread offered to Yahweh as Memorial (Lev 24,9). The sacred meal par excellence is that in which all the people assembled together in the sacred place where Yahweh is present, share together (Dt 12:4-7; 11-22).

Of all the sacred meals in Israel, the most solemn and the most significant in the post exilic liturgy was the paschal feast. The paschal feast is conceived as a memorial of the great deeds of Yahweh in the history of his chosen people, particularly of the exodus event and the Sinaitic covenant. The celebration of the Jewish Passover is very important for the understanding of the Eucharist, for it is the Jewish celebration of the Passover that supplies the liturgical framework of the Eucharist, the feast in the course of which Jesus handed over to his infant church the gift of his body and blood.

The origins of the feast remain obscure. An analysis of the feast as described in Ex 12 reveals that it was made up of two originally independent feasts: the feast of the Passover proper and that of *Matzoth*. By the time of the composition of Ex 12, both the feasts were so interlocked that the name of Passover embraced them both.

The Passover feast (cfr Ex 12,1-14) grew out of a springtime festival sacrifice of a young animal to procure the prosperity of the flock. This ancient pastoral practice goes back to pre-Mosaic times, the Hebrews were still semi-nomads. At the time of Moses its religious significance was profoundly changed. Now this celebration is made to serve as a memorial for the deliverance from Egypt. It is to be celebrated annually, on the 14th of *Nisan*, in family groups. A lamb is to be offered to Yahweh (Ex 12,3-6). Its bones may not be broken (Num 9,12). The blood is used to smear the Jewish houses as a sign of preservation (Ex 12,7.22-23). The lamb is to be eaten hurriedly, before setting out on the journey (Ex 12,8-11). The Passover therefore signifies the passing or transit of Yahweh's avenging angel (Ex 12,13.23.27).

The feast of *Matzoth* (Ex 12,15-20) arose from an ancient agricultural feast in which, an offering was made of the first fruit of the crop (cfr Lev 23,9-14). The feast was probably borrowed, from the Canaanites after the chosen People settled down in Palestine (Lev 23, 10). The word 'matzoth' means unleavened bread and it gave its name to the feast, which was observed at the beginning of the barley harvest. It was

protracted from the 15 to the 21 of *Nisan*. During this time only bread made from the new harvest could be eaten, as representing a new beginning. Under divine inspiration, both the feasts become the commemoration of Yahweh's springtime intervention: the deliverance from Egypt. After the Exile, there is a true obligation of celebrating the feast, binding on all and only the circumcised (Ex 12, 43-49).

Therefore, the Passover "is a liturgical feast, involving sacrifice and an accompanying cultic banquet, celebrated by the community of the chosen People. Accomplished in the present, it commemorates the deliverance from Egypt in such a way that it represents the past redemptive activity "and looks forward to the future definitive intervention of Yahweh"(Kilmartin p.49).

Brief explanations of the various elements involved in the feast of Passover

a) The Passover emerged as a liturgical feast, involving sacrifice and an accompanying cultic banquet, celebrated by the community of the chosen people.

b) Sacrifice: The killing of the Passover lamb was considered to be the sacrificial act. "And you shall offer the Passover sacrifice to the Lord your God from the flock of the herd" (Dt 16,2-3).

c) Cultic banquet: The Passover was also a liturgical meal, the ritual of which is made up of eating the unleavened bread (symbolizing the hurry of the exodus departure), the bitter herbs (symbolizing the trials endured by the people on their way to the promised land), and the lamb, the victim of the sacrifice (expressing a personal involvement in the celebration), which had to be eaten as directed: "with a girdle round your waist, sandals on your feet, a staff in your hand. You will eat it hastily, it is the Passover in honour of Yahweh" (Ex 1,11).

d) The communal character: A minimum of 10 participants is needed for the celebration and if a particular household does not reach that number, then the family shall join its neighbour (Ex 12,4). The communal character is essential to the celebration and a merely private celebration of the feast is not only inconceivable, but was strictly forbidden.

e) It is a celebration of the chosen people: Non-Jews are definitely excluded from the celebration. "No uncircumcised person shall eat it" (Ex 12,48). All Israelites are strictly bound to keep it and an unjustified neglect of the celebration is punishable with excommunication (Num 9,13).

f) Commemoration of the past; It is not a mere subjective remembrance of the past salvific event, for there is a mysterious yet real identification between the liturgical celebration and the past event now commemorated. The past redemptive activity of Yahweh is rendered symbolically present here and now as if the worshippers had themselves come out of Egypt. The feast is to be kept every year as a "memorial" (*zikkaron*, *anamnesis*) of Yahweh's deliverance of his people and of the exodus event, culminating in the covenant. In the yearly celebration of the paschal meal, the exodus-event was made present, as it were actualized. The rites of the eating of the paschal lamb, of the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs, the surrounding ritual of joyful praise and thanksgiving for God's deeds make the people experience and re-live the past events.

g) The character of the Passover feast as an event: This is testified by the liturgical setting given it in the Jewish liturgy. During the celebration, the head of the

family must, at the request of his son, explain the meaning of the ritual. "This is because of what Yahweh did for me when I came out of Egypt" (Ex 13,8). In the *Mishnah* we read: "From generation to generation each one is bound to consider himself as having personally come out of Egypt, for it is written: 'This is because of what Yahweh did for me when I came out of Egypt' ... He did all these marvels for us and for our fathers".

h) The various blessings (*berakoth*, singular = *berakah*) in the paschal liturgy: proclaimed God's wonderful deeds and blessed him for them. This proclamation gives to the feast the character of a liturgy of praise (*eulogia*) and thanksgiving (*eucharistia*). When the blessing is pronounced over the objects, they become sacred (are blessed) as result of the praise given to God over them.

i) The ritual: The main features of the paschal meal are the following:

01) Preliminary course: A first cup is accompanied with a short blessing and then the bitter herbs are consumed.

02) The Passover liturgy: The head of the family explains the special features of the Passover meal (Ex 12,26) and proclaims the outline of the story, the *haggadah*. It is followed by the singing of the first part of the Passover *hallel* (Ps 113-114). Then the second cup is drunk.

03) The main meal; The main meal consists of the unleavened bread and the paschal lamb. The head of the family pronounces a blessing over the unleavened bread, distributes it and the meal is eaten with the unleavened bread, the paschal lamb and the bitter herbs.

04) The important ritual action; The president pronounces over the "cup of blessing" - the third cup filled with wine, mixed with water -, a series of *berakoth*. These give praise to God for three reasons: a) for the meal received from him, b) for the whole history of Salvation and c) for the present renewal of Yahweh's creative and redemptive action and the expectation of its final accomplishment in the Messiah's advent and the coming of the kingdom.

05) Conclusion: The second part of the *hallel* (Ps 115-118) is sung in striking harmony.

j) Looking to future: The celebration looks forward to Yahweh's definitive intervention. The recitation of Is 11, a messianic prophecy, on the eighth day of the feast is indicative of this future dimension. The eschatological note is also struck by the *hallel* or hymn sung at the end of the meal. Thus the Passover, celebrated in the present, embraces in an unbreakable unity the past and the future. The past is grasped in faith and the future is apprehended in hope in the celebration of the present.

2. Covenant Sacrificial rites

One of the pivotal points of the religious consciousness of Israel was the Sinaitic Covenant (Mosaic Covenant). This covenant was sealed with a true sacrificial meal. The book of Exodus has preserved a double account of the ritual. a) Ex 24,1-2 and 9. Moses and Aaron and the elders of Israel go up to the mountain where Yahweh dwells. They are called to partake of a sacred meal in the presence of Yahweh whom they are able to see. b) Ex 24, 3-8. Moses having built at the foot of the mountain 12 standing stones, representing the 12 tribes of Israel, and an altar to symbolize

Yahweh's presence, offers holocausts. The sprinkling of the blood of the covenant on the altar and on the people seals the union of God with his people. The blood, the symbol of life, which is the property of God, is given by God to be offered to Him in sacrifice and received from him as a token of communion. The blood is sprinkled on both, directly on the people physically present and symbolically on Yahweh represented by the altar and thereby an unbreakable bond of life is symbolised between Yahweh and the people: "I shall be your God and you shall be my people" (Jer 7,23). Hereafter all ritual practices in Israel will be somehow related to the Sinaitic ritual action. The Covenant had been once for all sealed in the blood sprinkled at Sinai. Hence the whole cultic life of Israel presupposed the covenant.

As for its nature: The foundation of the covenant is God's unmerited love freely bestowed on the People. At the same time it is a conditional alliance in which the People are "bound to respect the demands made on them. God's fidelity, however, to the terms of the covenant is met by the People's fickleness and infidelity: The Sinaitic Covenant in soon in shambles and the prophets promise in the name of God a new and eternal Covenant (Jer 31,32), when the People will finally acknowledge God's love and fidelity (Is 42,6). The new covenant will be immersed with *shalom* (Ez 36,26). It will supersede the Sinaitic Covenant (Ez 16,20) and bring with it the supreme gift of the Spirit (Ez 36,26ff). This new Covenant is connected, nay, identified with the Messiah: "I have appointed you as a Covenant to the People" (Is 42,6), and it will be sealed by the outpouring of Jesus' blood (Heb 9,11-14).

For the Israelites, blood is nothing but the symbol of life (Dt 12:23 *Be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is life*). It must be noted that nowhere in the OT is the blood of the victim drunk by those partaking of the sacrifice. The communion rite of drinking the blood of the victim will be an innovation by the New Covenant sacrifice (Jn 6:56,60).

The forms of covenant rituals vary in Israel in the course of history. There were holocausts, communion sacrifices, expiatory sacrifices, vegetable offerings, incense offerings etc (Cfr Lev 1-7; 22:17-30). Before the exile the communion sacrifices were more frequent, after the exile, the holocausts. But whatever be their nature, all were related to the Covenant on Mount Sinai.

For the Hebrews, the offering of sacrifice was the centre of their religious life (cfr Lev 1-7). In the beginning, these sacrifices bear a great similarity to pagan sacrifices. But later on, they are gradually purified. Among them, the following types are to be found:

a) Unbloody Sacrifices or offerings in the form of gifts (*minha*=gift) of the first fruits (e.g. flour, bread, wine... cfr Lev 2). They were either public (v. g. the spring-time sacrifice: Lev 23,10-20) or private, like the sacrifice for sin, meant specially for the poor (Lev 5,7-13). Some times these unbloody sacrifices were joined to bloody sacrifices; wine was poured, out at the foot of the altar, part of the sacrificial victim was burned that it may go up in smoke to God, and the rest was distributed among the priests.

b) Bloody Sacrifices: If an animal is to be offered, first it is killed, then the altar is sprinkled with its blood, and part or the whole of it is eaten. They were of three different kinds:

i) Holocausts (Lev 1), to be offered daily by the people, express man's total surrender to God and therefore constitute the most perfect form of sacrifice. The whole victim was burned, thereby passing into God's own possession. The animals offered were bulls (Lev 1,5), lambs or goats (Lev 1,11); for the poor, turtle doves (Lev 1,15; cfr Lk 2,24). The blood of the victim was poured by the priest on the altar and then the entire victim was burned.

ii) Peace-offerings (Lev 3) or communion offerings, admirably expressed the idea of union with God. The blood was poured on the altar, but only part of the victim was burned (the victim's fat). The meat was given over to the priests and distributed among the participants. This kind of sacrificial meal, with Yahweh as head of the family and the participants as his guests was a symbol and pledge of the bond of friendship uniting God and men.

The Covenant and Paschal sacrifices belong to this category. In the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb, the blood was not supposed to placate God, but only to protect the Israelites (cfr Rev 14,1; 7,3 about the sign of the lamb on the elect). Despite the fact that the Egyptian captivity came gradually to be considered as the symbol of sin, the Passover sacrifice is probably not to be regarded as a sacrifice of expiation for sin. In the covenant sacrifice, especially the unitive function of blood stands out, in keeping with the nature and purpose of the covenant itself (cfr Ex 24,4-8; Heb 9).

iii) Sacrifice of expiation, whether sacrifice for sin (Lev 4,1-35) or sacrifice of reparation (Lev 5, 14-26; 17,1-6). The former was offered either to remove some legal impurity or as an expiation for sins committed out of ignorance or frailty. The latter dealt with infringements of rights, either of God or of the neighbour, their end being the restoration of the lost unitive friendship with God. The blood was poured, on the altar, its extremities being only sprinkled. The animal's fat was burned and the meat was either given to priests or burned outside the tent.

The most solemn of all was that offered on the great day of Expiation (*Yom Kippur* Lev 16). The Holy of Holies as well as both the altars, that of incense and that of holocausts were sprinkled with blood. The purpose of the sprinkling was the purification of the sanctuary from the sins committed (Lev 16,17-19), or the sanctification of the altar (v.19), since the sins of the People had polluted the temple of Yahweh. The glory of Yahweh, lost by sins committed in the temple, is restored only after such ritual purification (Ez 43,2-5; 44,4).

It was deeply embedded in the Hebrew mentality that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Heb 9,22). The intrinsic and necessary connection between blood and sin (to obtain its expiation) is already given in Lev 17,11: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, ...for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life". Therefore blood (signifying life) is something sacred, because it is the symbol of life and life is God-given. By means of the outpouring of blood, man offers his own life to God, signifying that he wants to attain the communion and fellowship with God, which had been destroyed by sin.

Hence, biblically, the effusion or sprinkling of blood is not primarily linked with the idea of punishment for sin, and much less with the notion of substitution of the sinner by the victim, but it rather expresses man's desire of self-offering as a means to achieve communion with God. Hence the fundamental meaning of blood in all three sacrifices is very similar. This communion with God is either first established

(sacrifice of the Covenant) or protected and preserved (Paschal sacrifice) or restored after it had been lost through sin (expiatory sacrifice). Sometimes both the sacrifices are joined, that of expiation (Heb 9,11-14) and the Covenant sacrifice (Heb 9,15-22).

Acceptance of the victim: Every sacrifice consists of two movements; man offers a victim to God and then God accepts the victim which represents man's own self surrender. In the OT this divine acceptance was expressed some times through the burning of the victim. God accepted the victim, transformed into odour of sweetness. This acceptance is also expressed by the divine fire, which descends from heaven and consumes entirely the victim (Lev 9,24; 1 Kgs 18,28). This is quite in keeping with the Semitic conception, which considers God to be 'devouring fire' (Dt 4,24), who often manifests himself in the midst of smoke and fire (OT theophanies: Ex 19,18) and in the form of fire protects the Tent of the Covenant (Ex 40,38). The victim was also considered to be endowed with a certain divine quality and 'to sacrifice' became synonymous with 'to sanctify the victim' (Dt 15,19). The victim accepted by God and overflowing with divine sanctity, was judged to impart this sanctity to those who shared in it (Lev 6,27). Fire descending from heaven did not destroy the victim but rather sanctified it and transmitted it to the divine domain (Lev 9,24; 2 Chr 7,1-3)

At other times, it was the priest, as representative of God, who had to declare whether the sacrifice was acceptable or not. At times the formulas are negative ('It is an abomination'. Cfr Lev 19,7; 22,23). On the contrary, acceptance is manifested through objective statements: 'it is a burnt offering' Lev 1,9; 'it is a cereal offering' Lev 2,6; and more explicitly: 'The Lord your God accepts you' 2 Sam 24,23.

A definition of sacrifice can be given only now, and it should include its three main elements: immolation, oblation and acceptance. Sacrifice is a special act of external cult, whereby man transforms a thing externally visible (immolation) and offers it to God (oblation) to be accepted by Him (acceptance) as a sign of his union with Him.

Theology of Sacrifice

There is a purely spiritual notion of sacrifice, which tends to reduce a sacrifice to a purely spiritual action; and contrary to it, there is also a view that nothing short of the killing of a victim is an adequate expression of a sacrifice. But the truth seems to lie between the two opposite extremes: on the one hand, some exterior acts expressive of man's sacrificial spirit is necessary in every sacrifice; on the other, the killing of the victim or the destruction of the offering does not constitute the essence of the sacrificial act. Hence a sacrifice is constituted by a ritual oblation expressive of man's disposition of self-oblation to God.

Sacrifice, belongs to the realm of signs. It is an exterior act of cult, directed to express man's dedication and sacrificial disposition towards God. Two elements must therefore be distinguished in every sacrifice: the interior and the exterior, the sign and the signified. Of the two elements, which makeup a true sacrificial action, the interior act, in a sense, is the most important, for the ritual offering is a lie if it does not express a personal act of oblation. Nonetheless, the interior act of self-oblation becomes strictly sacrificial in so far precisely as it is expressed and carried by a ritual offering. The cultic act of self-oblation is no empty sign; rather it is a symbolic action, in which the sacrificial disposition of the worshipper is contained and by which it is

actualized. If the sacrifice is to take up its full meaning, the person's self-gift must be expressed sensibly.

Thus sacrifice is a gift offering made to God, through which man's self-offering finds a concrete ritual expression. The gift, which is made, is symbolic of the giver's dedication to God; similarly, the acceptance of the gift on God's part is symbolic of the gracious acceptance of the giver. The last and adequate end of every sacrifice is union with God. In this search for union, the various ends of the sacrifice - to give praise and thanks to God, to adore him, to ask for his blessings and to seek his pardon - are implied.

More specifically, two OT sacrifices are usually considered to be announcements of the Eucharistic sacrifice, viz. that of Melchisedek and the prophecy of Malachi.

i) Malachi's prophecy (Mal 1,10-11)

Context: About the year 450 BC disappointment is rampant because the prophecies of Is., Jer. and Amos have not been fulfilled. Disappointment gives way to doubt. Yahweh's saving promises remain a dead letter. What is the value of the Covenant? Leaders and people fail to read the signs of the times and this leads them to religious indifference. In this atmosphere Malachi delivers his prophecy: the promises remain unfulfilled because of the priests' religious cynicism. They offer only imperfect gifts thereby violating the Law (Deut 15,21; Lev 3, 1-6) and Yahweh refuses to accept them. Therefore Levitical cult is rejected outright but a new type of sacrifice is immediately announced, pure and universal sacrifice.

Text: The prophet speaks of external sacrificial cult but the type of sacrifice is not indicated. 'Incense' or 'sacrifice of incense' is a generic term. The word 'offering' (*minha*) is also generic. The same word is used of the sacrifice of Abel (Gen 4,4) and of Levitical sacrifice in general, whether bloody or unbloody (Is 1,13; 1 Chr 16,21). Before the Exile, '*minha*' is applied to all sacrifices, after the Exile usually to unbloody sacrifices.

This sacrifice certainly refers to the messianic era. It is to be universal, both by reason of place and time ('from the rising of the sun') and people ('among the nations'); whereas the Mosaic Law prescribed a sacrifice to be offered in Jerusalem (Deut 12,1-16). Moreover, according to the law, Gentiles were barred from taking part in the sacrifice of Yahweh (Lev 20,24; Deut 7,5). This new sacrifice belongs to the messianic age, when cult will be universal in character (Mich 4,1-11; Is 2,2). At the time of the prophet no sacrifice was endowed with the qualities of purity and universality mentioned here. A merely internal sacrifice is also excluded, as the entire context speaks of a cultic, external sacrifice.

Consequently, Malachi announces a new type of sacrifice, which belongs to the messianic age. The Eucharist, pure and universal sacrifice, appears in the light of the NT as the fulfillment of this prophecy. Yet, this does not imply necessarily that the literal sense of the text is directly Eucharistic.

ii) Sacrifice of Melchisedek (Gen 14,18-20) Context: Melchisedek, King of Salem, comes forward to meet Abraham and his company who were returning from a military expedition. Melchisedek brings out bread and wine and blesses Abraham, who, in return, offers him a tithe of everything

Text: Exegetically, there is almost certainly no connection between the offering of bread and wine and Melchisedek's priesthood. The Hebrew word used ('hosi') means simply to bring out, without any sacrificial connotation. It is simply a charitable act on the part of Melchisedek, offering food to Abraham and his companions; in return, Abraham offers him part of his booty.

This text is quoted and explained in Heb 7,1-6: Melchisedek is a type of Christ but the text is silent about any sacrifice offered by Melchisedek, and therefore no comparison is established between Melchisedek and Christ on the sacrificial level. Christ is certainly "a priest according to the order of Melchisedek" (Ps 110,4: this Ps. is messianic, cfr. Mt 22, 43ff), but this does not imply that Melchisedek is Christ's Eucharistic type. This Eucharistic interpretation, fairly common among the Fathers, starts only in the 3rd cent with Cyprian and seems to have a very scanty foundation in the text itself. It is very likely that we know nothing of a 'sacrifice of Melchisedek' (Kilmartin).

Types and Prophecies

1) All the ritual practices had one danger inherent in them: one could neglect the sign value and cling to the rite; hence the prophetic warnings against such abuses. The prophets do not condemn the sacrifices as such, but only their misuse. Hos 2,5 and 4,13 warn against the practices of the Canaanites. Amos 5,25; Is 43,23 - it is not the multiplication of the victims that honours God. The subjective disposition is the important factor, without which no sacrifice can be pleasing to God (Am 4,4; Is 1,11-16). With special vigour, the prophets insisted on the need for personal interior commitment (Jer 6,20; Hos 6,6; Mich 6,6-8; Amos 5,21-25). Interior sacrifice is the essential element of the sacrifice (Ps 50,18ff).

2) In this context, and in view of the disillusiones occasioned by the ritualistic formalism of the people, the prophetic hopes for an eschatological renewal is well understood. Not only is a new covenant foretold, which will be realized in the eschatological future (Jer 31,31-34; Ez 37,26-27), and sealed by the *Ebed Yahweh* (Is 42,6), but the sacrificial system itself will be renewed. In the messianic age, a new and perfect oblation will be offered to Yahweh among the nations (Mal 1,11); likewise the common meal of a messianic feast will gather all peoples (Is 55,1-3). In the OT, these are the two main types of the Eucharistic mystery. The first foreshadows the Eucharist as a sacrifice, the other as a meal.

The New Testament Realisation of the Mystery of the Eucharist

A. The Literary and Oral Traditions

The NT has preserved four accounts of the Last Supper: Mt 26,26-29; Mk 14,22-25; Lk 22,15-20; 1Cor 11,23-26. These agree in their main elements: all are archaic in character; all refer themselves to Christ's institution. Nevertheless their differences are also evident. Hence the questions: how are the various narratives related to each other? How can we explain their similarities and differences? What kinds of documents are we really dealing with? Which comes closest to the original supper of the Lord?

The most ancient written account is 1Cor, written between 54 and 57. But this is no proof that it contains the oldest oral tradition. The tradition recorded in 1Cor is indeed very ancient. It was handed to the Corinthians in 51 (1Cor 11,23), but had been received by Paul himself at an earlier date, probably at Jerusalem in 36-37 or in Antioch in 40. However, even this early date is no guarantee that the tradition on which Paul's account is based is more ancient than that of the other accounts. Only internal criticism can decide.

All four accounts show signs of stylisation, and hence they differ. Stylisation here means liturgisation. That is to say that the four texts are liturgical texts, witnessing primarily to the way in which the Lord's Supper was being celebrated in various churches. The accounts of the institution are not reports made by the synoptics or Paul, of what happened at the last supper. Thus, it is through the records of the early liturgical celebrations only that we can ascend to the historical event of the last supper itself.

What are the criteria to indicate a lesser or more advanced state of liturgical evolution? In this regard, two important traits distinguish Lk and Paul from Mk and Mt.

- a) While in Mk and Mt, the two rites of bread and wine are joined together within the meal (Mt 26,26, Mk 14,22), in Lk and 1Cor, on the contrary, the two rites are separate, the meal taking place between the one and the other (Lk 22,20, 1Cor 11,25). Lk and 1Cor seem here to witness here to a more ancient liturgical practice. Their sequence is closer to the Lord's Supper than Mt and Mk. If in the two latter accounts the two blessings are joined together, the reason seems to be that the accounts have preserved only what was necessary to explain the Christian meaning of the supper, as based on Christ's institution.
- b) The commission given by Christ to the apostles to repeat the ritual is found in Lk for the bread (Lk 22,19) and in 1Cor for the bread and wine (11,24,25). And it is absent in Mt and Mk. This too seems to indicate that the oral tradition on which Lk and Paul are based is anterior to the other. The anamnesis formula must be presumed to go back to a commission given by Christ to the apostles at the last supper. It seems reasonable to think that while the earliest celebration made mention of this commission, at a later stage of liturgical celebration, it could be left out. Silence here indicates a well-established practice. The commission was taken for granted. Moreover, in Mt and Mk, there is more liturgical stylisation: beside the tendency towards a greater conciseness of expression, there is also a tendency towards symmetrical parallelism - this is my body, this is my blood (Mt 2,26-28; Mk 14,22-24).

Thus two traditions seem to emerge, both liturgical, though representing different stages of evolution: The Antiochian preserved by 1Cor and Lk and the Markan followed by Mt. The former seems anterior to the latter. Regarding the contact between the traditions, the opinions of the exegetes vary.

The greatest difficulty is that of the composition of Lk. Some say there is a double composition; 22:15-18 and 22:19-20. Of the two compositions of Lk, the first

presents the Lord's Supper as the historical consummation of the Jewish pasch; the other as the initiation of the Christian Eucharist. In both there is the mention of the "cup". Some others say that the "cup" in 22,15-18 is the first cup of the liturgical feast and the cup in 22,20 is the sacramental cup, the cup of blessing. Hence they argue that Lk's composition is at once the most complete and closest to the original supper of the Lord.

Independently of the divergent opinions, it can be said that the Antiochian tradition represented by Lk and 1Cor preserves a greater exactitude in the description of the Last Supper and manifests to a lesser degree the effects of liturgical influence. Moreover, in view of its Semitism, it seems to have been written in Jerusalem, before being used in the Hellenistic Antioch. In general, the Antioch-Palestinian account may be taken as a guideline. This however, need not mean that Mk and Mt have not in some instances preserved primitive forms older than the other tradition. Hence, each of the four accounts must be taken into consideration and both traditions must be co-related. Neither is free from liturgical stylisation; and both through their liturgical form lead back to Christ's institution. Christ at the Last Supper said more than what is recorded in any of the four accounts. Of His words, both liturgical traditions have preserved as much seemed necessary to convey the meaning of the new institution. The written forms however, are but stereotyped accounts of living liturgies.

B. The Historical and Liturgical Setting

The Lord's Supper took place undoubtedly in the context and in the atmosphere of the Paschal Feast. The paschal associations are clearly indicted in the institution narratives. Whether or not Christ's farewell meal coincided with the actual celebration of the paschal meal remains however a disputed question. The real difficulty concerning Christ's supper as a paschal celebration is not theological, but historical and chronological. Theologically it seems clear that Lk (22,15-18) interprets Christ's supper as, a paschal meal. His intention would seem to consist in showing that Christ's institution replaces the paschal feast of the old dispensation. On the historical plane, however, it is more difficult to show that the farewell meal of Christ coincided with the Jewish paschal celebration, the main objection being the apparent contradiction between the chronology of the synoptics and that of St. John. According to Mk 14,12, the Lord's Supper is understood to have taken place "on the first day of the unleavened bread, when the Passover lamb was sacrificed". Jn 18,28 supposes however that Christ's trial and death took place on the day when the Passover was to be eaten. Scholars dispute over this point.

The liturgical viewpoint: The Last Supper was a sacred meal in the context of the Jewish liturgy, and hence it necessarily takes up a paschal connotation. Of special significance is the fact that from the liturgical viewpoint, all the elements preserved in the institution narratives, however fragmentary, fall in line with the ritual of the Jewish paschal celebration. Christ's Eucharistic words correspond to the *berakah* pronounced over the unleavened bread and over the cup of blessing.

Within the framework of the Jewish liturgy, Jesus selects the unleavened bread and the third cup and so transforms them that they become the vehicles of his Eucharistic self-gift. Only the bread and wine are taken and not the bitter herbs and the lamb. Bread and wine are now more than part of the ritual of the Jewish Passover; they are an essential component of the Christian Eucharist. Jesus has transformed profoundly the religious meaning of the celebration and as a consequence, an entirely

new Christian ritual, a new sacramental memorial has been born out of the fertile womb of Judaism. Now the deliverance from Egypt recedes to the background and its place is taken by the death and resurrection of Jesus, sacramentally present in the new rite. The core of the celebration is radically changed, but the all-enveloping atmosphere of profound thanksgiving remains intact. The stream of joyous praise and gratitude remains untouched, but it is given a new orientation, a new finality, a new significance. Calvary has displaced exodus, the bread and wine are no longer simple material elements, but symbols that carry the real presence of the giver - Jesus. Thus the Christian Eucharist is born.

C. Exegesis and Theology

a) Institution Narratives

Introduction: Yahweh had commanded the Israelites to celebrate the Passover as a memorial of their departure from Egypt, which was a prelude to the covenant sealed on Mt. Sinai in the "blood of the covenant". Similarly Christ commanded his disciples to celebrate the Christian Eucharist as a memorial of the new covenant sealed in his own blood. Christ's intention gave to the Last Supper the meaning of a Paschal Meal, at least symbolically and theologically. Indeed, Christ assumed the symbolic and theological significance of the Passover celebration, while giving it a new meaning in the context of his own mystery. The memorial of the new covenant was destined to involve God's people in the covenant-event more clearly than the ancient memorial. The paschal meal, commemorative of the new covenant, would, under the signs of Christ's body given for man and his blood shed for them represent in a new fashion the mystery of his sacrifice. This intention of Christ must be shown in the institution narratives. Hence we explain the meaning of the key concepts and then we will look into the biblical theology of the Eucharistic institution.

1) Praise and Thanks: εὐλογησας (benedicere) and εὐχαριστήσας (gratias agere) both refer to the *berakah* said by Christ over the bread and wine. Mk and Mt have preserved both Greek terms (Mk Vs. 23&24; Mt Vs. 26&27); 1Cor and Lk, only the second (1Cor v.24, Lk Vs. 17&19). Both translate the Hebrew *berakah* with its double connotation of "praise" and "thanks". Christ said the *berakoth* over the unleavened bread and the wine in the context of a paschal meal. The tone of this celebration was expected to be one of joy; the table companions were reclining on couches to symbolize the possession of the promised land; the wine was prescribed as a joyful symbol of the covenant.

Only the realization that this was a farewell meal probably made clear at the beginning of the Supper, viz., in the *berakah* on the first cup and the *haggadah* which explained the meaning of the celebration (Cfr Lk 22:15-18) tempered the joyful atmosphere of the occasion. Yet the joyful liturgical setting was maintained. The *Hallel* was sung (Cfr Mk 14:26; Mt 26:30, referring to the second part of the *Hallel*). Besides the eschatological logion (and the new content of the eucharistic words), some gestures which Christ added to the ritual made the apostles realize the gravity of the occasion and the newness of the institution: thus the washing of the feet and the mandate of charity (Jn 13,2ff) replaced the ritual washing of the hands which customarily preceded the main part of the meal. The sacramental words over the bread correspond to the *berakah* over the unleavened bread with which the meal proper began. In the customary celebration, this *berakah* was a short one. As the Antiochian tradition testifies, the Eucharistic words over the wine were separated by the supper

from those over the bread. The former were pronounced at the beginning of the meal proper, the latter at the end. Thus the sacramental cup is the "cup of blessing" or the third cup. Traditionally the ritual accompanying the third cup was the most solemn. The president having got up from his couch and raising the cup, pronounced various *berakoth*. Christ inserted the new institution of his body and blood in the double proclamation of divine praise over the unleavened bread and the cup of blessing.

2) Body and Blood:

a) All four accounts have the term $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ for body and $\alpha\iota\mu\alpha$ for blood. The Aramaic original for body seems to have been *bisra* (*basar* in Hebrew). Some exegetes are of the opinion that the original form in Greek is $\sigma\alpha\rho\chi$ (flesh), as is preserved by Jn 6:54., rather than $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ (body). The former would render more exactly the Hebrew *basar*; $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ would have been introduced in Hellenistic Churches for the sake of adaptation to the Greek mentality and so as to avoid the impression of crudeness regarding the institution. Others on the contrary consider $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as the more likely Greek rendering; it would express more faithfully the Hebrew idea of the human person conveyed by the term *basar*. Both translations of *basar* are found in LXX.

b) The binomial "body and blood" (*basar-dam*) (*soma-haima*). The parallelism between the two terms is clearer in the Markan tradition (this is my body // this is my blood) and less pronounced in the Antiochian tradition (this is my body // this cup is the new covenant in my blood). According to the Semitic anthropology, *basar/sarx* does not stand for the body as a component element of man distinct from the soul; it rather means the whole person in his exterior manifestation and expression: the whole person in his corporeal existence. Man does not have a body; he is body, in so far as he communicates outwardly. To give one's body is to give oneself. Christ while speaking of his body refers to his whole person, to his life, which is given. Similarly for Christ's blood *Dam/haima* is the symbol of life par excellence (Lev 17:11; Dt 12:23). To give one's blood is to give one's life, to give oneself entirely. Thus the reference to Christ's blood can also have in view his whole human self. Jesus' use of the word blood at the Last Supper must be taken in a concrete sense as referring to himself in his totality as a living being, but with the emphasis on the living force within him.

3) Given and Poured out: Christ's total self oblation is further specified. According to the Antiochian tradition, Christ's body "is given for you" ($\delta\iota\delta\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\nu$ Lk 22,19, 1Cor 11,24 "is for you"). This connotation is absent in Markan tradition. However, Christ's gesture of breaking the bread, preserved by all four accounts, symbolizes that his whole life will be given. Similarly Christ's blood ($\alpha\iota\mu\alpha$) can by itself indicate the blood that is shed), according to both traditions is poured out ($\epsilon\kappa\chi\upsilon\nu\nu\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\nu$) (Mk 14, 24; Mt 26, 28; Lk 22, 20). Again, the present participle refers to the coming death. This reference is missing only in Paul. The symbolism of the cup must not be overlooked. The NT attaches to it the idea of suffering (Mt 10:38; Jn 18:12). The gesture of pouring the wine into the cup corresponds to that of the breaking of the bread, as a symbol of Christ's self gift. Thus Christ's giving of his body and pouring out of his blood are a binomial expression of the offering of his life, of his whole self. The literary reference, common to both the Antiochian and the Markan traditions is the *Ebed Yahweh*, mostly the 4th song (Is 53:10-12). The Markan

tradition reproduces the "many" of Deutero Isaiah 53:11-12, which in the OT implies a universalist, unlimited outlook; Lk's "for you" determines and concretises this universalist outlook in the liturgical use. Mt's more explicit version "for the forgiveness of sin" is also reminiscent of Is 53:12. Jesus characterizes his coming death as the voluntary oblation of a martyr. He depicts himself as the servant of Yahweh. His sacrifice is a person's total offering of self.

4) Blood and Covenant: In the institution narrative, Christ's blood is spoken of as "covenant blood", a connotation that necessarily implies the context of a ritual sacrifice. The *berakah* over the cup of blessing served as the occasion at which Christ explained the meaning of his paschal mystery as sacrifice of the new covenant. The offering of his life, symbolized in the pouring of his blood is ordained to seal the new covenant of God with men. The term διαθηκε is found in all four accounts of the supper. Διαθηκε is so focal a word in the Eucharistic text that its interpretation is the key to interpreting the meaning of the supper and with it the meaning of Christianity. Christianity becomes a new relationship between God and man of which Christ is the essential realization and in which other men participate by sharing his body and blood. However, the Antiochian and Markan traditions differ both in their expression and in their literary source. The Antiochian tradition seems more archaic while the Markan manifests a more advanced liturgical stylisation and theological elaboration. According to the Antiochian tradition the "cup" represents the new covenant; this new covenant is sealed by Christ's pouring of his blood. The allusion here is directly to the "new covenant" of Jer 31:31-34, where the covenant is explicitly called a "new covenant". In the context of Christ's pouring of his blood as a martyr, there is also a reminiscence of the *Ebed Yahweh* appointed by God to be the covenant of the people (Is 42:6; 49:8). In the Markan tradition, the expression "this is my blood" is clearly parallel to "this is my body", but the "blood of the covenant" is used as a technical expression, which goes back to Ex 24:8. Direct allusion is made to the ritual "Communion-Sacrifice", by which the first covenant of Yahweh with his people had been sealed on Mt. Sinai (Ex 24:3-8). Both covenants are sealed in blood-rite. But while the first covenant was sealed in alien blood, the "new covenant-blood" is Christ's own: "this is my blood of the covenant" (*dam berithi*). Thus the Markan tradition describes Christ's death not simply as that of a martyr (the *ebed Yahweh*) who offers himself for all men, but in terms of a cultic sacrifice, which is not necessarily the case with allusions to the servant of Yahweh. Indeed, once the sacrificial interpretation is made clear by the reference to the "covenant-blood", it seems legitimate to find in the duality of the sign, flesh and blood, and in their separation, a symbol of the sacrificial character of Christ's death. Admittedly, Christ's sacramental words over the bread did not suffice to make this clear to the apostles, especially since the supper separated these words from the sacramental words over the wine (Cfr. Lk 19, 1Cor 25). The latter however, brought out the symbolism. The separation of the bread and wine signifies the separation of the body and blood, that is, death. Thus in retrospect, Christ's flesh is the flesh of a sacrificial victim, as his blood is sacrificial blood.

5) "This is my body" // "This is my blood": The four accounts have preserved the formula: "This is my body" (Mk 22; Mt 26; Lk 19; 1Cor 24). The Markan tradition has the parallel formula for the cup: "This is my blood" (Mk 24; Mt 28). The Greek copula is by itself, no sufficient proof as to the significance of the phrase, for the original Aramaic or Hebrew has no copula. As reconstituted by Jeremias, it reads:

den bisri den idhmi (Aramaic) or *Zah Besari zeh dami* (Hebrew); "this my body", "this my blood". (Cfr. *The Eucharistic Words*, pp. 220.). The more obvious and natural interpretation of these words, pronounced over bread and wine, is not the realistic but the symbolic; This represents, signifies my body, which is delivered up; this is the sign of my blood, which is shed. Furthermore, from the use of the present tense of the participles: *διδόμενον* (which is given) (Lk 19) and *ἐκχυνόμενον* (which is poured out) (Mk 24; Mt 28; Lk 20) little can be derived to sustain the affirmation that the body and blood are actually present. For the present tense can refer to an imminent (unavoidable) future. Here it refers to the forthcoming death on the cross.

However, the context of Christ's words leads to their realistic interpretation. The words and gestures over bread and wine constitute together a prophetic action (Jer 13:1-13; Ez 5:1-5). Such an action for a Semite does more than merely signify (II Kings 13:17-19). Christ's words were a prophetic figuration of his sacrifice, communicating its power in anticipation. The reference to the "blood of the covenant" is here decisive. "This is my 'blood of the covenant'" means that, by drinking his blood, the apostles are already entering into the new covenant relationship established in him; this they do as really and more so than the Hebrews partook of the Mosaic covenant by being sprinkled with the blood of the victim. The first covenant did not only signify, but also established a covenant relationship; so does a fortiori, the new covenant-blood, which is Christ's. The ritual of Mt. Sinai was a communion-sacrifice: only communion in the sacrificial victim itself, not in a mere symbol could make the Israelites share the covenant relationship sealed in it. Similarly, if communion in Christ's blood is to communicate a new covenant-relationship established in his sacrificial death, it is necessary that the sacrifice should be there and the blood of the victim really present so as to be shared actually. (1Cor 10:16; lit 27,29.) The sacramental blood is- the blood of a cultic sacrifice; the "real presence" of the body and the blood is bound up with the presence of the sacrifice and forms with it an organic unity.

6) Memorial and Proclamation: "Do this in view of my memorial" means "do this as a memorial of me". The memorial-formula is found only in the Antiochian tradition: in Lk only for the bread (Lk 19); in 1Cor for both the bread (24) and the cup (25). Its authenticity cannot however be doubted. What is new and unexpected in Christ's commission to the apostles is not the intimation to reiterate the celebration of the sacred meal; it is the content of the memorial and the new significance, which is attached to it.

"Do this" - where the present imperative indicates something to be done repeatedly- refers to Christ's various actions of taking bread, giving praise and thanks, breaking and sharing (Lk 19 more complete than 1Cor 24); Mk and Mt insist on Christ's intimation: Take (Mk 22) and eat (Mt 26). Similarly (Lk 20; 1Cor 25) for the cup, the commission to repeat Christ's way of acting bears on the various gestures: taking the cup, giving praise and thanks, sharing the cup (cfr. Mk 23; Mt 27). Mk and Mt insist on the fact that all partook of the same cup as was customary for the cup of blessing of a paschal celebration; Mt adds the intimation to drink. The reference to Ex 24:8 in Mk and Mt makes it imperative to understand the precept to eat and drink as sharing in the victim of sacrifice. Christ innovates, however, in more than one way. He is the victim, whose body and blood are there present. Moreover, sharing in the

victim does not consist only in eating its flesh (as in the OT sacrifices), but in drinking its blood as well. In order to have part in the new covenant, the disciples must not only be sprinkled with the blood of the victim, they must drink the blood of the Lord.

The significance of the ritual celebration instituted by Christ is most clearly expressed by the term "memorial". It must be understood in the light of the theology of the memorial already implied in the liturgical celebration of the ancient covenant. The table-companions of the paschal meal partook personally of the covenantal event, which became present to them in a mysterious fashion. This however was a figure of the liturgical celebration of the new covenant. Under the signs of the bread and wine, Christ institutes a memorial of his sacrificial death; therefore the celebration of the new paschal meal implies sharing in the new covenant-event, mysteriously made present. The new Eucharistic institution will be representation of the paschal mystery by which the new covenant is sealed. In Christ's mind the liturgical anamnesis of his paschal mystery is not meant to be a mere subjective reminder, but an objective memorial. It is one and the other; if however it reminds men of God's decisive intervention in his Son, more deeply it puts them in contact with the mystery itself. It gives its true significance to Christ's institution, as it gave its true significance to the Jewish paschal meal. By instituting the sacred meal of his body and blood as Memorial, Christ inserts into it the reality of his covenant-sacrifice.

Hence the value of the sacred meal before God's own eyes. The celebration of the new Passover meal, as it were, serves as a reminder to God, of the mystery of his Son's sacrificial action through death and glorification. As an objective memorial, it contains the reality of the sacrifice of the new covenant established through Christ's death and glorification.

St. Paul further explains the meaning of the memorial (1Cor 25) as proclamation of the death of the Lord (1Cor 26). The proclamation of the paschal mystery in the Eucharistic celebration has the value of an event. At the last supper, Christ's action was a prophetic action ordained to a future deed; now its celebration is a commemorative action related to a past event. In both cases, however, the sacrifice contained in the paschal mystery is present. It was present then in anticipation; it is present now as memorial.

7. The eschatological logion: In Lk, the eschatological logion is found at the beginning of the narrative, in 15-18; in Mk and Mt at the end (Mk 25, Mt 29); St. Paul adds to his theological explanation of the meal as memorial a brief allusion to its eschatological significance (1Cor 26). Supposing one composition in Lk 22,15-20, it would seem that Lk has restored Christ's eschatological words to their exact place in the lord's supper, namely to the *berakah* over the first cup, or the *haggadah* that followed soon after. However, it may also be that Christ explained twice the eschatological significance of the celebration, since the normal development of the paschal meal offered two occasions to do so; at the beginning of the meal (*berakah* over the first cup and *haggadah*) and at the end (*berakah* with eschatological messianic perspective pronounced over the cup of blessing).

The exact meaning of the logion is not easy to determine. What is the 'kingdom of God' referred to in it? Does St. Paul's explanation coincide with that of the logion attributed to Jesus by the synoptics? What is the meaning of Jesus' avowal of abstinence? From Lk 16 there is no need to deduce that Christ fasted at the last

supper and abstained from sharing the paschal meal with the apostles. On the other hand, in spite of some patristic evidence to the contrary, it seems clear that Christ did not partake of the Eucharistic bread and cup, which he distributed to them. This seems clearly implied in the avowal of abstinence where the wine is concerned. That Christ did not share with his apostles in that which he was giving to them as his body and blood will have helped them to realize the newness of the institution.

How must the eschatological perspective of the logion be understood? In St. Paul's explanation of the logion, "until he comes" seems eschatological in the strict sense. St. Paul has in mind the final accomplishment of Christ's work in the eschatological banquet of the *parousia* and gives to the eucharistic celebration its eschatological dimension. The same is often taken for granted where the logion itself, as present in the synoptics, is concerned. Christ's avowal of abstinence from wine - wine is a symbol of the messianic goods; sharing in the cup evokes the covenant and its final realization - "until the kingdom of God comes" (Lk 18) is understood as an ardent prayer, a pressing supplication that the eschatological kingdom may come. While in Mk and Mt, the perspective of the logion is eschatological in the strict sense (opposing the eucharistic meal to the eschatological meal), in Lk, where it introduces the Lord's supper and opposes it to the old Jewish paschal rite, the perspective is primarily ecclesial. The kingdom of God in which Christ will share his blood is the Church.

Both perspectives must probably be considered, the Eucharistic feast being in this world an anticipation of the messianic banquet. What distinguishes the Christian eschatology from the Jewish is the tension between the "still to come" and the "already realized". The "kingdom of God" does coincide adequately with the *parousia*. It finds its first realization in the Church. Hence the ecclesial meaning of the logion. The perspective of an immediate future seems prevalent in the early interpretation as witnessed to by the Fathers and the liturgical documents. The Church's Eucharistic celebrations mark a first realization of Christ's eschatological perspectives. At the last Supper, Christ has directly in mind the immediate realization of the sacred commensality established in his blood. Jesus' avowal of abstinence indicates that the sacramental efficacy of the Eucharistic cup is entirely dependent on the paschal and Pentecostal event. The celebration of the Eucharistic mystery supposes the Church constituted in power by the effusion of the Church (Jn 7:39); conversely, the Eucharistic communion of the Church, even though oriented towards the future, already realizes in the present the sacred commensality of the eschatological banquet. The Church's Eucharistic meal links the great event that is past with the full redemption which is to come.

8) Synthesis: The institution narratives have a threefold OT background: the covenant blood of the Sinaitic communion-sacrifice (Ex 24:8), the oracle of Jer 31:31, concerning the new covenant, and the voluntary self oblation of the *Ebed Yahweh* (Is 53:11-12), appointed as covenant (Is 42:6; 49:8) for the people. The three converge to make the new Eucharistic institution the sacrificial meal of the new covenant, leading to the formation of the new people of God who press on their way to the heavenly banquet.

What did Christ do at the last supper? While his paschal mystery was drawing near, Christ made it present in anticipation under the signs of his body and of his blood, inserting the reality of his sacrifice into the ritual of the Passover meal. In the

prefiguration of his mystery, he offered ritually his imminent sacrifice; for him the last Supper meant a decisive and irrevocable commitment to the fulfilment of his sacrificial act. For the apostles, it meant sharing the body and blood of the victim in the sacred banquet of the new Passover; thus they entered in anticipation into the new covenant relationship to be established through the paschal mystery. Christ - and he alone - offered; they - without him - partook of the divine victim. He offered himself to the Father in sacrifice and gave himself to the apostles as spiritual banquet. There is more; for Christ entrusted the sacrament of his sacrificial meal to the people of the new covenant to be celebrated as memorial. By this, he meant to perpetuate the presence of his mystery in the Church. By repeating Christ's gestures over bread and wine, God's new people must re-live his mystery and be united with it in a sacrificial banquet.

b). The Apostolic Celebration (The Apostolic Tradition)

1). In the Gospels, mostly in Lk, the apparitions of the risen Christ, are often accompanied by a meal. Such is the case in the episode of Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35), in those of the apparitions in the upper room (Lk 24:36-43) and at the lake of Tiberius (Jn 21:9-13); Cfr also Mk 16:14 and Acts 1:4.

2). The celebrations of Christ's memorial by the Church presupposes the constitution of the Church in the power of the Spirit, a theme which precisely the Lucan narrative postpones till the 50th day after the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:1). This however does not mean that the narratives mentioned above are devoid of all Eucharistic connotations. They mark the link between the Last Supper of the historical Jesus and the Eucharist of the Church. Thus, Christ's *berakah* and breaking of the bread at Emmaus (Lk 24:30), though not a sacramental action, is, a symbol of the Eucharist.

3). The first traces of Eucharistic celebration in the apostolic Church are found in Acts 2:42,46; 20:7-11. The "breaking of the bread" refers to the rite which accompanied the *berakah* over the bread in Jewish celebration and which had been associated by Christ with the sacramental words. How the entire celebration came to be named after the fragmentary rite performed over the bread remains a matter of conjecture. Never, before its Christian usage did the expression designate an entire meal. That it refers to a Eucharistic celebration is certain where 1Cor 10:16 is concerned; it is more than probable for the passages of the Acts mentioned above judging from their liturgical context: the breaking of the bread is linked with the teachings of the apostles (*Didache*) and prayer (Acts 2:42). The Eucharistic celebration remains distinct from the synagogue liturgy still attended by Christians; it is practised in the houses (Acts 2:46).

The Markan tradition of the Last Supper, liturgical in its origins, indicates that at an early stage of liturgical elaboration the rituals of bread and wine had already been joined together (cf. Mk 14:26; Mt 26:26). At Corinth (1Cor 11:17..) it was preceded by an agape. Such was probably the custom in the other Churches as well. The frequency of the celebration had forced it out of the liturgical setting of the paschal meal: Acts 20:7 speaks of weekly celebration "on the first day of the week".

At Corinth the whole procedure, agape and sacramental rite, was called the "Lord's Supper" (1Cor 11:20).

c). Pauline Theology

1). The two major Eucharistic texts in St. Paul are 1 Cor 10:14-22 and 1Cor 11:17-34. The situation of the two texts in the epistle is the following: Paul answers various questions some of which are concerned with cultic meals of non-Christians. An observation on the proper ordering of the Christian liturgical assembly introduces remarks concerning the way in which the Eucharistic mystery is celebrated at Corinth. The foundation for Paul's reproaches is not that the Christians of Corinth consider the celebrations as an ordinary meal and the Eucharistic food as ordinary food. Rather, they fail to celebrate and to carry out worthily that which they believe. Their celebration is not in keeping with their faith; they fail to implement the concrete demands of Christ's institution. Paul explains that the sacrificial meal entrusted by Christ to his Church as a memorial brings with it concrete exigencies of communion. The exegesis and theology of the two texts are examined separately.

2). 1Cor 11: 17-34: The text is structured in three parts. First, the exposition of the case (17-22): the Eucharist is celebrated with separate factions (σχίσματα) (18), separate groups (αἰρεσεις) (19)} this is in contradiction to the communal demands of the assembly (ἐκκλησία) (18). It shows lack of respect for the community (ἐκκλησία) (22). Paul in the second part recalls the tradition, which he has received and handed on to the Corinthians (23-25), the nature of the Lord's Supper condemns their practice. Their way of celebrating is a caricature; "it is not (οὐκ ἐστίν) the Lord's supper that you are eating" (20). The third part is a *midrash* or moral application (26-34): because they fail to conform themselves to the mystery which they celebrate, the Corinthians are judged by it. To partake of it without discernment (διακρίνων) is to drink and eat one's own condemnation (κρίμα) (29). Let each one examine himself (διεκρίνομεν) (31), testing himself (δοκιμαζέτω) (28), lest he should become the object of God's judgement (εκρίνομεθα) (31), as many among them have become already (30)...

The point stressed here is that the celebration of the Lord's Supper is a proclamation of the death of the Lord (26), as memorial (24,25); therefore (Ὡστε) it truly contains Christ's body and blood and cannot be treated lightly (27). It is a communal meal by which Christ's memorial is performed. Abuses are a sin both against the community and against the body and blood of Christ. To eat and drink "without discerning the body" (29) - 'body' stands here for the whole sacramental sign, as in the expression 'breaking the bread' – means without recognizing the eucharistic body in its specific claim to fraternal charity. The proclamation and memorial of the Lord imply his presence in the communal celebration; this in turn brings with it specific exigencies regarding the community. Noteworthy is the way in which Paul passes directly from the Last Supper of Christ with the apostles to that which the Church of Corinth celebrates (26); the sacramental food of the Corinthian celebration is identical with that which Christ himself distributed among his apostles; it is his body and his blood (23-25).

3). 1Cor10: 14-22. The Eucharist is presented as communion with the body and blood (σῶμα – αἷμα) of Christ, victim of sacrifice. This communion builds up the Christian community into one whole, united with the risen Lord, who gives them 'one spirit to drink' (cf 1Cor. 12,13). A clear parallelism is drawn between the table of the Lord and that of demons, between the cup of the Lord and that of demons (21). One is the Christian Eucharist; the other represents the idolatrous practices of the heathens (14). By implication there is on either side as there was in the communion sacrifices of Israel (18) an altar (θυσιαστηριον) where a victim (θυσια) is offered in sacrifice (18); the altar is at the same time a table (τραπέζα) (21), where by partaking of the victim (θυσια) the worshippers are in "communion (κοινωνία) with the altar" (18).

In virtue of the parallelism, the Christian Eucharist appears clearly as a sacrificial meal: Christ is offered on the altar; he is received at a table. "To drink the cup of the Lord" and "to share at the table of the Lord" are the two component elements of the sacred banquet attached to the sacrifice. Both establish the Christians in communion with the Lord. The sacramental cup is called "the cup of blessing that we bless"; literally: "the cup of the blessing" (*berakah*) which we say" (16). This expression links the sacramental cup with the "cup of blessing" of the old paschal meal, while expressing also its newness. Similarly, 'the bread that we break' (16) looks back to the old rite of the 'breaking of the bread': yet it is new. The newness of the double rite consists in this: it "is a communion" (κοινωνία) with", that is to say, participation in the body and blood of Christ (16).

Thus by partaking of the sacramental body of Christ, we enter into communion with the risen body of the Lord. It is really quite clear that this body is first of all the individual body of the Lord, who died and rose again, with which we enter into communion by receiving the Eucharistic bread. As a consequence of our union with the risen body of the Lord we become one body among ourselves, thus the eucharistic communion with Christ is essentially ecclesial: it is together that Christians partake of the table of the Lord; their communal partaking of the Lord's table builds up the community. The Eucharist effects the unity of the Church. "Because the bread is one, we who are many are one body (σῶμα), for we all partake of the one bread" (17); cf Rom 12:5; 1Cor 12:13-14,27.

The Eucharistic mystery appears here clearly as a communal sacrificial banquet. It is a sacrifice, for a victim is offered on an altar; it is a banquet, for the victim is shared at a table. Here as in the institution narratives, the real presence of Christ's body and blood is implied in and postulated by the covenant making sacrificial meal to the Lord. Paul describes the Eucharistic food as the Lord's body and blood and not as signs of it. Paul makes it clear that the Lord's supper is not a new sacrifice (Rom 6: 9), it is Christ's one sacrifice so perpetuated and made present that the believers may communicate the divine victim.

d). Johannine Theology

1) St.John's Gospel has not preserved the institution narrative, even though five chapters (13-17) are concerned with the events of the Last Supper. On the other hand, Chapter 6 contains a long discourse on the "Bread of Life", which constitutes the major Eucharistic text of St.John. The sacramental symbolism of the fourth gospel

must be kept in mind with its references to baptism and the Eucharist. The Eucharistic overtones of the Cana miracle (2:1- 11) are largely agreed upon in view of the context: banquet, wine etc. Similarly the blood gushing from the pierced side of Christ visualised as already exalted (8:28; 12:32) on the cross symbolises the Eucharist (19:34). In 1Jn 5:6-8 the water and the blood refer to Christ's baptism and his death on the cross (He came by "water and by blood"). Thus the sacraments are linked with the whole Christ event. Christ's baptism inaugurates the public mission while death on the cross symbolises the entire paschal mystery.

2) Context and Composition: Ch 6 of the gospel is treated here after the institution narratives, even though it is traditionally interpreted as a promise of the Eucharist. This option requires an explanation, since it would seem to contradict the logical and chronological order. It has been observed that the institution narratives are liturgical texts used in the early churches; a process of induction is required to ascend from them to the original supper of the Lord. Likewise, the influence of the stylisation must be recognized in Jn 6.

3) Without entering into a detailed discussion of the historical context and the literary composition, the following may be said briefly as regards the Eucharistic significance of the text. It seems difficult to admit that at such an early stage of Christ's ministry as the feast of the Passover, which precedes the Passover of his death (6:4), the Eucharistic mystery could have been directly proposed to the Jews as the object of a fundamental option; on the other hand, the eucharistic realism of 6:51b-58 is beyond doubt. And many Eucharistic elements can be observed in the whole text (6:11; 6:23; 6:52b, 6:53-59). An influence of the Jewish Passover liturgy with its exodus-motif is also noticeable. St. John's discourse may in part have served as Christian Passover *haggadah*. The exodus motif is found mostly where the significance of the heavenly food is explained (6:26.), with reference to the significance of the manna.

4) In Jn 6 two themes are running parallel: the Word of God and the Sacrament of Christ's body and blood. Both are different forms of the "bread of life". And the Word and Eucharist are intimately and inseparably united and are simultaneously affirmed throughout the discourse, even though the stress passes progressively from the Word to the Eucharist.

5) In order to understand the "bread of life discourse", the particular way of John's gospel is to be kept in mind. Throughout, John's gospel is a "book of signs". Signs and words are essentially related. In John signs are not meant as extrinsic proof of Christ's credentials, but they introduce one to the mystery of his person. Thus Christ raised Lazarus in order to convey his own mystery as resurrection and life (11:25); he restored sight to the blind man in order to bring home the idea that he is the light of the world (9:5). Similarly in Jn 6 the miracle of the loaves (6:1-15) is meant by Christ as a sign of his mystery: "I am the bread of life" (6:35,48). The sign of the loaves is centred on Christ as King of the Messianic banquet.

6) The Plan and Structure of the "Bread of Life" Discourse: In its structure, 8 cycles can be distinguished (5&6 are the most important). The various cycles follow much the same progressive pattern, though not all the elements are in each cycle. The pattern of the cycle:

» A mysterious declaration made by Christ (A)

- » Provokes misunderstanding and raises a question (B)
- » The clarification of which and answer to which imply a further declaration and a further mystery (C)

First Cycle: (6:24-26) Two ways of seeking Christ: the correct way and the wrong way:

- B. Christ's coming is an enigma (24-25)
- C. Christ stigmatises the wrong way of seeking him (for material food), indicating that the authentic motif is to pierce through the sign to the mystery of his person (26)

Second Cycle: (27-29) Two kinds of works: the true and the false

- A. Christ opposes the working for (seeking) two kinds of food, material and that of life eternal (27)
- B. What work must we do? The Jewish understanding concerning the religious quest (28)
- C. The true work is faith in the one sent by God (29)

Third Cycle (30-32) Two kinds of signs

- B. They demand a sign (30-31) like the people before (Ex 3:13; 4:1-9) and during the exodus in the desert.
- C. They have understood the OT materially: It is not Moses who gave the sign, but the Father. The Manna was but a figure of the "true bread from heaven" (32).

Fourth Cycle: (33-35) The true bread from heaven

- A. It is that which God gives, which truly comes from heaven and gives life to the world (33)
- B. Give us that bread always (34)
- C. I am it (35a)

Fifth Cycle: (35-47) Jesus, bread of life (35a) comes down from heaven

- A. Invitation to partake in the banquet of wisdom (35-40). Christ, identified with Wisdom, is sent by the Father. One must believe in him and come to him in order to have eternal life.
- B. Murmuring, like the Jews in the desert against the manna which they no longer desire (41-42). The stumbling block is the incarnation.
- C. Indirect answer (43-47). They do not believe for the lack of docility. They are not drawn by the Father, because they refuse his invitation. See the interior character of the new covenant (Jer 31:33).

Sixth Cycle: (48-58) Jesus bread of Life (48), given life to the world

A. From the bread of life through Christ to Christ-the-bread (48-51). Transition from word to sacrament, from believing to eating. The latter implies Christ's death (51c): his flesh given "for the life of the world".

B. Scandal: his flesh (σάρξ connotes frailty and weakness: 1:14; 1Jn 4:2; 2Jn: 7) leading to life eternal (52)

C. Declaration and solution (53-58). The flesh and blood of the Son of Man (exalted and glorified: cfr. 62-63) is the source of life, if eaten and drunk (53-55). Life is derived from the one sent by the Father (56-58)

Seventh Cycle: (59-66) Scandal of the disciples

B. They are offended by Christ's words (59-60)

C. Paradoxical answer: Christ's weak flesh will ascend. In its state of weakness, it is powerless; glorified as belonging to the Son of Man, it will give life by the Spirit (61-63). What is a cause of scandal is also what brings the decisive light, provided the option of faith is made (64-66).

Eighth Cycle: (67-71) Option proposed to the twelve

B. Jesus' question: Do you want to go away too? (67)

C. You have the message of eternal life and we believe (68-69)

A. The passion is recalled to mind; one of the twelve will betray him (69-70). The sacrament of Christ's body and blood is essentially related to the paschal mystery.

EXEGESIS AND THEOLOGY

7) Exegesis: Cycles 5 and 6 require close examination. Already from 6:32 onwards, the discourse turns into a *midrashic* commentary on the reference to the manna miracle in Ps 78:24, quoted in 6:31b. The *midrash* will find its climax in the sacramental realism of Vs. 52-58, where sacramental eating and drinking matches the realism of the heavenly bread. The manna was real food orientating the people towards the Word of God (Dt 8:2-3). The Word incarnate is God's decisive word to men. Communion with him culminates in the Eucharistic bread.

7) In Cycle 5, Christ's identification with the bread of life (35a) come down from heaven maintains primarily the perspective of the revealing incarnation of the Word of God. Cycle 6 takes a deeper orientation. Jesus is the bread of life (48), not merely as Incarnate Word, for he gives himself for the life of the world (51b). This gift of self takes the form of food, of flesh and blood to be eaten and drunk. These concepts give the discourse a definite sacramental orientation. Christ's flesh given "for (ὅπερ) the life of the world" (51b), in so far as it evokes 1Cor 11:24b and Lk 22:19b, connotes the personal oblation which he makes of himself in death as a martyr in fulfilment of the prophecy of the *Ebed Yahweh*. The flesh (σάρξ) found only in St. John, seems in the writer's mind, to refer primarily to the whole human self of the Word incarnate. The same concept σάρξ implies the frailty of his human condition in 1:14 (also 1Jn 4:2; 2Jn 7). In this context and in view of the Semitic usage, the binomial flesh-blood (σάρξ-αἷμα) too may refer to the gift, which the Word

incarnate makes of his whole human self, not necessarily to the separated elements of a ritual sacrifice.

However, the drinking of the blood (51b) suggests the sacrificial cup of the institution narratives and presupposes a sacrificial immolation. The fact remains nonetheless that for John the Eucharist is primarily the memorial of the redemptive incarnation. The redemptive incarnation tends to the Eucharist and finds in it its final implication and application. In this re-presentation of the redemptive incarnation, the meal aspect is stressed. The flesh and the blood are real food and drink (6:55); that the flesh must be eaten and the blood drunk is repeated three times (6:54,55,57). The sacramental realism is obvious: to eat Christ's flesh is to eat him (6:57). The effects of the Eucharistic banquet are brought out clearly: partaking of Christ's flesh and blood gives life everlasting (6:54); that is life in union with Christ (6:57), implying a personal presence and reciprocal indwelling (6:56), a deceneration of self to be centred on Christ (6:57).

9) Synthesis: The Eucharistic text in St. John has a threefold reference: a) The exodus theme is found mostly in the typology of the manna (Jn 6:31,49,58; Cfr. Ex 16: 4.; Num9: 15) b) The parallelism between Moses (Ex 24:9..) and Christ (Jn 6:3) going up the mountain (compare Ex 16;12 and Jn 6:12). The reference to the past event of Exodus sets the Eucharist in the context of the history of salvation. c) The theme of the eschatological banquet (Is 25:6-8). It orients to the future and its realization is found mostly in the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. That of the banquet of Wisdom (Pro 9:1-6) inspires the formulas of the 5th cycle on the bread of life. John 6:35 joins together both themes of the eschatological meal and the banquet of Wisdom.

10) The following may be said as a summary of St. John's gospel regarding the Eucharist:

- a) The Eucharistic mystery in John is centred on the person of Jesus. Faith acknowledges in him God's manifestation in history through the incarnation of the Word.
- b) The redemptive death of the Incarnate Son is operative in his message (Word) and in the sacrament of his flesh and blood (Eucharist).
- c) The sacrament of his flesh and blood is considered as a banquet more explicitly than as sacrifice.
- d) The messianic banquet served by Christ has an eschatological dimension: the present life derived from it is the anticipated possession of life eternal, a pledge of eschatological resurrection.
- e) The eternal life is Trinitarian in its structure: Christ's life-giving power comes from the Father (6:39-40: 6:57..); He possesses it through the Spirit (6:63). At the centre is the Christ-event.
- f) It is as "Son of Man" i.e., as glorified (6:62) and "spiritualised" (7:39; 16:7) that the Word Incarnate becomes the source of life.
- g) The Eucharist is the sacrament of the flesh and blood of the Son of Man (6:53). It emerges as a sacramental entity, which is dependent for its efficacy on the three major mysteries of Christ's life: Incarnation, Redemptive sacrifice, Resurrection-Ascension.

It is the sacrament of the flesh and blood (Incarnation) of the Son of Man (Resurrection-Ascension) who offers himself as a sacrifice for the salvation of the world (redemptive sacrifice).

h) The communal aspect of the Eucharist is not brought out in the discourse on the bread of life.

i) The parable of the vine and the branches (Jn 15) and the prayer for unity intentionally recorded at the last supper (Jn 17:22..) indicate that the Eucharist is the sign par excellence which effects the union of all people in Christ.

j) Rather than a mere "promise" of the Eucharist, the discourse on the bread of life is in some respects the climax of the NT revelation concerning the Eucharistic mystery. In St. John, the sacrificial aspect is less clearly brought out. On the other hand, the discourse on the bread of life shows best the realism of the sacred banquet and the effects of sacramental communion.

The Eucharistic Mystery in Tradition

1) The apostolic Church understood and celebrated the Eucharistic mystery as a communal sacrificial meal, continuing the memorial of Christ's Paschal Mystery under the sacramental sign of his body and blood. They linked directly their celebration of the Christian Passover to the institution of Christ at the, last supper. Granted the difference in emphasis between the various documents, the stress in the apostolic church as a whole is laid on the Lord's banquet or meal; the mystery has preserved the "Lord's Supper".

2) The liturgical documents of the apostolic church witness to a first evolution in the manner of celebration: the two sacramental actions over bread and wine seem to be joined together, at the end of a Christian agape. At this stage Christians still attended the synagogue liturgy, while celebrating the Lord's Supper in the houses. Soon however, the synagogue liturgy of the Word of God becomes amalgamated with the Christian sacramental rite.

3) It is in the second century that the Eucharistic celebration was definitely separated from the fraternal agape, gradually evolving towards the form, which, in its main lines, will be common to all the liturgies. At the last supper Christ had performed 7 actions: He took bread, pronounced the *berakah* over it, broke it and distributed it; similarly he took the cup, pronounced the *berakah* over the wine, and again presented it to the apostles. All the Christian liturgies will telescope these 7 actions into 4 distinct rites; taking bread and wine and placing them on the altar (offertory); the combined *berakah* over bread and wine (eucharistic prayer); the breaking of the bread; and the sharing of the body and blood of Christ (communion rite). These four rites together make up the Eucharistic liturgy proper. The liturgy of the Word, which precedes, goes back to the Jewish synagogue liturgy. Though of distinct origin, the liturgy of the Word and Eucharistic liturgy become in the Christian celebration intimately united.

4) The various aspects of the Eucharistic mystery, sacrificial, communal, ecclesial, are reflected in the names which the earliest tradition gives to its

celebration. The biblical names put in evidence the meal aspect and the co-union dimension. Christians meet at the table of the Lord (1Cor 10:21), to celebrate the Lord's Supper (1Cor 11:20); thus they break the bread together (Acts 2:42,46). The term Eucharist was soon destined to designate the celebration itself.

5) Now we have to look into the growing awareness of the Church concerning the content of the Eucharistic mystery. For this purpose, we have to consider both the liturgical practice and theological reflection of the centuries of Christian tradition. Then we will come to understand that the history of the Eucharist is to a great extent, the history of the fluctuations in emphasis in its various aspects as communal sacrificial meal.

A. The Patristic Period

Introduction: The primary sources of this period are the various Eucharistic prayers used for the liturgical celebration in the churches, both eastern and western. However, in the first two centuries, the liturgical formularies are not fixed. No formulary of a Eucharistic prayer is found before that of the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus. The early documents of the post-apostolic times and of the second century must therefore be studied. The great liturgies, beginning with the third century will also be considered, which will be followed by the theological reflection of the Fathers of the classical period.

1) The Early Documents: a) The *Didache*: First non-biblical record of a Eucharistic celebration (50-70 AD?): Though some argue that the work is contemporaneous with, the apostolic writings, the influence of the books of the NT seems to be only indirect. The *Didache* has a "Eucharistic Prayer", which is very archaic in connotation. Here follows the text of the prayer:

Didache 9:1 With regard to the Eucharist, give thanks in this manner: 2. First for the cup "We thank you, our Father, for the holy vine of David your servant, which you have revealed to us through Jesus your servant. Glory be yours through all ages". 3. Then for the bread broken: "We thank you our Father, for the life and knowledge which you have revealed to us through Jesus your servant. Glory be yours through all ages. 4. Just as the bread broken was first scattered on the hills, then was gathered and become one, so let your church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom, for yours is the glory and power through Jesus Christ, for all ages. 5. Let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist except those baptized in the name of the Lord. For it is of this that the Lord was speaking when he said "do not give what is holy to the dogs".

10:1 When your hunger has been satisfied give thanks thus: 2: "We thank you Holy Father, for your holy name, which you have made to dwell in your hearts and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which you have revealed to us through Jesus your servant. Glory be yours through all ages! 3: All-powerful master, you created all things for your name's sake, and you have given food and drink to the children of men for their enjoyment, so that we may thank you. On us moreover, you have graciously bestowed a spiritual food and drink that lead to eternal life, through Jesus your servant. 4. Above all we thank you because you are almighty. Glory be yours through all ages. 5. Lord, remember your church and deliver it from all evil; make it perfect in your love and gather it from the four winds, this sanctified church into the kingdom you have prepared for it, for power and glory are yours through all ages! 6. May grace come and this world pass away! Hosanna to the God of David! If anyone is holy, let him come! If anyone is not, let him repent! *Marana tha!* Amen. 7. Let the prophets give thanks for as long as they wish.

Comments: >1< The composition of *Didache* can be placed between the years 50-70. >2< For a long time there was the discussion whether this prayer may be seen as a eucharistic prayer in the strict sense. The difficulty was the absence of the institution narrative. There was also the question whether the chapters 9 and 10 may be connected with chapter 14. Some argued that ch. 9-10 refer to the religious meals and 14 to the Sunday Eucharistic celebration. >3< The prayer is said to be Eucharistic in the sense of the Jewish liturgy: It gives praise and thanks (*berakah*) to God for the salvation of his people, which he wrought through his child/servant Jesus. >4< Recognizable are also elements that constituted the Christian Eucharistic celebration at the early stage when it was very close to the Jewish liturgy. The first cup (9:2) is followed by the double sacramental rite over bread (9:3) and wine (10:1.). The traditional *berakoth* are found in their natural order, the rite over the cup of blessing being accompanied with three distinct *berakoth*. >5< The Christian character of the Eucharistic prayer is marked by the repeated reference to "Jesus Christ your child (servant)". The newness brought about by Jesus is most apparent in 10:3: "On us moreover, you have graciously bestowed a spiritual food and drink that lead to eternal life, through Jesus your servant". "Your servant Jesus" is a very old title, which can be found in Acts 13:13-26 and 4:27-30. >6< The formula with which the text ends in 10:6b is not a formula of dismissal addressed to the non-competent, rather, it is an invitation to sacramental communion directed to the competent. >7< No explicit mention is made of the memorial either of the death-resurrection of Christ or of the new covenant sealed in his blood. The prayer is centred on spiritual food and drink given by God through his Servant Jesus. These are described in terms, which remain very close to St. John's gospel >8< The Eucharistic gathering up of the Church (9:4) is underlined both for the present time (9:4) and in an eschatological perspective - *marana tha* - (10:5). >9< *Didache* 14 makes clear mention of the Sunday Eucharistic celebration:

Didache 14:1 On the dominical day of the Lord, come together to break bread and give thanks, after having, in addition, confessed your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure. But let anyone who is at odds with his fellow, not join with you until he has first been reconciled, lest your sacrifice be profaned. For here is what the Lord says: "In every place and at all times, let them offer me a pure sacrifice, for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the nations."

>10< The sacrificial, communal, and ecclesial aspects of the Eucharistic mystery are all brought out in this text, which explains the demands of fraternal charity made by the nature of the Eucharist on the members of the community. >11< Here, for the first time, Mal 1:11 is seen as type of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

b) St. Ignatius of Antioch: The Eucharist in the Mystery of the Church: (107 A.D). Ignatius provides us with the first explicit testimony of the role of the bishop who presides over the Eucharist. One of the central themes of the letters of Ignatius is that of unity and concord. This theme is emphasized with much insistence in the Eucharistic texts. The unity of the Eucharistic celebration must reflect the unity of the Church, which is one as the flesh of the Lord is one: "Take care then to partake of one Eucharist, for one is the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one the cup to unite us with his blood, and one the altar as there is one bishop with the college of priests and deacons my fellow servants. Thus you will conform in all your actions to the will of God" (Ad Philad, 4:1)

Indeed, unity is not merely symbolized by the Eucharist; it is efficaciously realized in its communal celebration, which ought to be frequent: "when you assemble together frequently, the powers of Satan are overthrown and his work of destruction are vanquished by the concord of your faith" (Ad Ephes. 13:2). To "break one and the same bread" in perfect harmony is to share together the "medicine of immortality, the antidote against death so as to live in Christ for ever" (Ad Eph 22:2). The Eucharist has power to give life, because it is the flesh (σὰρξ) of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which the Father in his loving kindness raised from the dead. Christ's flesh is a God-given bread, his blood, and "love incorruptible". Thus the Christological and ecclesial aspects of the Eucharist are intimately united. Communion in Christ's body implies ecclesial communion. According to Ignatius, the Church must be one as the Lord himself is one. The unity of the Church is realized by the communal celebration of the Eucharistic mystery. As the centre of unity of the celebration, the bishop is also a symbol of the cohesion, which binds the community. So he says: "Where the Bishop appears, there let the people be; just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church".

- c) St. Justin: The Eucharist confronted with the heathen and the Jews (150-160):
 - 1) St. Justin confronts the Christian faith with both paganism and Judaism. He has two works of importance in this regard: The Apology addressed to the heathen in which Justin states the facts about the Eucharist soberly and the Dialogue with Trypho, directed to the Jews, in which he shows how the mystery of the Eucharist fulfils the prophecies and outdoes the aspirations of the OT.
 2. In the First Apology, chapters 65-66 describe summarily the Eucharistic celebration, which is said to follow after the conferring of baptism. The liturgy presented in ch. 67 is a Sunday liturgy. If both fragmentary descriptions are joined together, a rather complete picture of a typical 2nd century Eucharistic assembly can be obtained.
 3. This is the order of the celebration: readings both from the OT and NT, followed by the homily; common prayer and pax; offertory rite which consists in bringing bread and a cup of wine with water to the president. There follows the Eucharistic prayer said by the president "as well as he can" or "according to his ability", that means, no standard formulary is provided. It is of course expected to develop the theme of the history of salvation after the pattern of the Hebrew *berakah*. It ends with the acclamation "Amen" by the people. Then the "bread and wine over which the Eucharist has been said" are distributed to those who are present and carried away to the absent. A sharing of goods in common is mentioned as a natural implication of the Eucharistic feast.
 4. The celebration is a communal sacrificial meal. The eucharistic prayer contains a sacrificial act: In 67:2 we read in all that we offer we give thanks to the creator of all things through his Son Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit.
 5. The liturgical assembly takes place on the Sun-day, "because it is the first day, the day when God transformed matter and darkness and created the world, and

also because it on this same day that Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead" (67:7).

6. The food shared at the sacred banquet is called "Eucharist". Thus from the eucharistic prayer and the liturgical celebration which contains it, the term passes over to the bread and wine sanctified by the Eucharist pronounced over them.
 7. The Eucharistic bread is related to the Logos. A parallelism is drawn between the Eucharist and incarnation, where the realism of Christ's presence in the food of the eucharistic banquet is clearly brought out: "Through the Word (Logos) of God, Jesus Christ our Saviour, becoming incarnate, took flesh (σάρξ) and blood (αἷμα) for our salvation: in the same way, the food, which, due to the prayer formed out of the word (logos) of Christ, has become Eucharist upon which we who are blood and flesh are fed and by which we are transformed - is the flesh (σάρξ) and the blood (αἷμα) of the incarnate Jesus. This is the doctrine that we have received". (66:2)
 8. The Dialogue with Trypho sees in the Eucharistic mystery the realization of the prophecy of Mal 1:11. Hence we see an insistence on the sacrificial aspect; the Eucharist over the bread and wine is the sacrifice foretold by the prophets; Christians "offer" it "in every place"; no other sacrifice is pleasing to God. Justin also insists on the memorial contained in the mystery. The Eucharist is a sacrifice precisely as memorial. It is the memorial, not merely of the passion (paschal mystery), but of the whole Christ-event, including incarnation. Christ has taught us "to offer bread as memorial of the incarnation by which He became subject to suffering and the cup to make the memorial of his blood" in thanksgiving. Thus Justin stresses the realism of the Eucharistic food and the transforming power, which the Logos gives it; and he considers the Christian celebration as the one true sacrifice agreeable to God, and as the Eucharistic memorial of the redemptive incarnation and sacrificial action of the Son of God.
- d) St. Irenaeus: The Eucharist confronted with the false gnos̄is (180-190 AD): Against the Gnostic tendency to consider matter as evil, Irenaeus unites in one and the same perspective the created world, man's body and the body of the risen Christ. The Eucharist here is considered as the "first fruits of creation", offered to God in sacrifice, in which at the same time the Logos is at work on our own earthly level and through which he shares with our own bodies his incorruptibility. The Eucharistic sacrificial meal has a cosmic dimension. Thus Christ took bread and wine "from the creation to which we belong"; these elements, "the first fruits of his own created things", he declared to be his body and blood. It is this offering that the Church has received from the apostles and which she now offers throughout the world to God - to him who gives us our very food as the first fruits of the gifts he makes to us under the covenant". The Jews no longer offer sacrifice; the Gnostic heretics cannot offer. For, how could they claim that the Eucharistic bread is the body of the Lord and the cup his blood, since they deny that he is the Son of the world's creator and his Word? Nourished by the body and blood of the Lord, our flesh receives life and incorruptibility: "Just as the bread produced from the earth is no longer ordinary bread after it has received the invocation (epiclesis) of God, but is the Eucharist - made up of two realities one

earthly and the other heavenly - in the same way our bodies are no longer corruptible after they have received the Eucharist, but now possess the hope of resurrection. Nowhere in the early Christian tradition is the sacramental realism of the Eucharist so deeply rooted in earthly reality as in the works of Irenaeus. Between the cosmos and the realm of the Spirit there is no break of continuity. In the Eucharistic elements we come in contact with the glorified flesh of the Incarnate Logos. By sharing in his own immortality, we are introduced into the economy of God's self-communication.

2) The Great Eucharistic Prayers

The core of the Eucharistic celebration is the Eucharistic prayer. There lies in tradition the primary and principle source concerning the meaning of the Eucharistic mystery. While at the last supper, Christ had inserted the mystery of his body and blood into two complementary rites, separated by a meal, each accompanied with its own *berakah*, the Church soon joined into one complex rite, the "double consecration", which it inserted into one long *berakah* forming one uniform composition. At the last supper, the institution was split into two parts, each taking the liturgical form of a prayer of praise and thanksgiving; now a protracted prayer of praise and thanksgiving contains and envelops the whole institution. This forms one unit, expressing one mystery of salvation. Such is the origin of the Eucharistic prayer. This form of celebration is found as early as in St. Justin, even though, no text for the Eucharistic prayer is given in the First Apology. From the phase of personal improvisation to the fixation of the liturgical formularies, the evolution was gradual. The first undisputed text for the Eucharistic prayer is found in the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus. Its formulary remains partly fluid. The great period of liturgical composition coincides with the golden age of the Fathers: from the middle of the fourth century to the middle of the 6th century.

a). The Apostolic Tradition: The Anaphora of Hippolytus: This Eucharistic prayer goes back to c. 225. The prayer may be regarded as originating in Rome, but it may not necessarily correspond to the practice in the Roman Church. The author presents it as a composition based on tradition. This Eucharistic prayer must have been composed in Greek. But it has come down to us only in translations, in two Coptic dialects, in Arabic and Ethiopian, and, for parts of the texts in Latin, and these have made it possible to reconstruct the original text. The text of the Anaphora follows:

- _ The Lord be with you: _ And also with you
- _ Lift up your hearts: _ They are turned to the Lord
- _ Let us give thanks to the Lord _ It is right and just

We give you thanks O God, through your beloved Child Jesus Christ, whom you have sent us in these last days as Saviour, Redeemer and Messenger of your will. He is your Word, inseparable from you, through whom you have created everything and whom, in your good pleasure, you sent from heaven into the womb of a virgin. He was conceived and became flesh; he manifested himself as your Son, born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin. He did your will and to win for you a holy people, he stretched out his hands in suffering to rescue from suffering those who believe in you. When he was about to surrender himself to voluntary suffering in order to destroy death, to break the devil's chains, to tread hell underfoot, to pour out his light

upon the just, to establish the rule of faith and manifest his resurrection, he took bread he gave you thank and said:

"Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you".

In like manner for the cup he said:

"This is my blood which is poured out for you.

When you do this, do it in memory of me."

Remembering therefore your death and your resurrection, we offer you the bread and wine; we thank you for having judged us worthy to stand before you and serve you as priests.

And we pray you to send your Holy Spirit on the offering of your holy church. Gather all those who share in your holy mysteries and grant that by this sharing they may be filled with the Holy Spirit who strengthens their faith in the truth.

May we be able thus to praise and glorify you through your Child Jesus Christ. Through him glory to you and honour, to the Father and the Son, with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, now and forever and ever! Amen.

Apart from the absence of the Sanctus and the intercessions, the overall structure of this prayer is familiar to us and we distinguish its following parts of the anaphora as follows:

i) Introductory dialogue

ii) Expression of Thanksgiving or prayer of praise and thanksgiving. In which the whole Christ-event from the incarnation to the paschal mystery is proclaimed as the culmination of the history of salvation. The formulation is clearly Christological. Every point that is mentioned is given as a motive for thanksgiving; the same theme re-emerges in the anamnesis and is implicit in the final doxology. Thus, the entire prayer is "eucharistic".

iii) Account of Institution; The commemoration of the Supper is made part of the ongoing prayer, which at every point is addressed to the Father. The commemoration is limited to the essentials.

iv) Anamnesis and Offering: In this Christ's death and resurrection are united and presented as sacrificial and Eucharistic.

v) Epiclesis: invocation of the fruits of the sacrifice upon the communicants, the main fruit being the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. The ecclesial meaning of the epiclesis is developed.

vi) Doxology: The final words of the prayer revive the theme of thanksgiving to the Father through the mediation of Jesus Christ.

vii) Amen: This is the response of the congregation.

Some observations: \diamond Here is found the oldest testimony concerning the introductory dialogue. \diamond The Christology is archaic: Christ is called "messenger" and "Child" after the fashion of Jewish Christianity. \diamond The anamnesis is conceived as sacrificial memorial, ordained to gather the Church before God and at his service. \diamond The epiclesis, where the allusion of the Spirit occurs, seems to be a later addition, though very ancient. \diamond The epiclesis does not pray for the consecration of the

Eucharistic elements or even that the sacrifice may be accepted by God; it merely calls upon God to send His Spirit, so that the eucharistic celebration may benefit the Church by uniting her members.

On the other hand, a comprehensive survey points out and emphasizes strongly that the Oriental liturgies offer copious testimonies of the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist. For instance, the East Syrian liturgy of Addai and Mari has the following prayer: "Oh God... sanctify this sacrifice and grant through it the possibility that you may forget our many sins and be propitious . . . and grant that they may be worthy to obtain the forgiveness of their sins through this holy body which they receive in faith." Similarly the Apostolic Constitutions, also from Syria: "Send down upon this sacrifice thine Holy Spirit...that he may show this bread to be the body of Christ and the cup to be the blood of Christ, that those who are partakers thereof . . . may obtain the remission of their sins."

The Jerusalem liturgy of St James is no different: "Lord.. your humble and unworthy servants...offer you this awesome and unbloody sacrifice for our sins"; then the request is made that the Lord may accept the offerings "sanctified by the Holy Spirit as the propitiation for our sins." It is this Jerusalem liturgy that establishes an explicit parallelism between the Eucharistic celebration and the blood-sprinkling ritual of the Jewish Kippur. The liturgy of St Basil is equally emphatic: "We plead and entreat your goodness . . .that this mystery that you have instituted for our salvation . . . may be unto forgiveness of sins and remission of our negligence".

B. The Theology of the Church Fathers

The Fathers of the Church used three approaches: spiritualistic language, symbolic language and realistic language:

i) Spiritualistic Language: This way of speaking described the Eucharist as a spiritual feeding on the body and blood of Christ by faith. We find this kind of language already in 1Cor 10:3-4 and in the *Didache*. Among the Fathers of the Church we see Ambrose and Augustine using this spiritualistic language. Ambrose says:

In that sacrament is Christ, because it is the body of Christ. Therefore, it is not bodily food, but spiritual. Whence also the apostle says of the type of it that our fathers ate spiritual food and drank spiritual drink. For the body of God is a spiritual body; the body of Christ is the body of a divine Spirit, because Christ is Spirit...

And Augustine says:

The body and blood of Christ will be life to each one if what is visibly received in the sacrament is spiritually eaten and drunk in very truth.

ii) Symbolic language: We find the symbolic mode of expression in Tertullian (+221):

The Lord called bread his body in order that you may understand him to have given the figure of his body to the bread... and having taken the bread and given to his disciples, he made it his body saying, "This is my body", that is, 'a figure of my body'.

Eusebius of Caesarea (+340) speaks of the bread as the symbol of his own body ... wine, which is the symbol of his blood. Cyril of Jerusalem says: *in the figure of bread is given to you the body and in the figure of wine is given to you the blood.*

Augustine says: *The supper, in which he committed and gave to his disciples the figure of his body and blood.*

iii) Realistic language: Very early in the patristic tradition, we find the realistic language. Such a close identification is seen between the sacramental signs and the reality that the bread and wine are said to be the body and blood of Christ. The reason for such language is the struggle against Docetism (the view that Jesus did not have a real body, but only appeared to have one) and Gnosticism (knowledge of reality to be attainable only by divine disclosure # matter evil). St. Ignatius of Antioch (+110) held that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Against Gnostics he says: *How can they say that the flesh yields to corruption, and does not partake of life, that flesh which had been fed on the body and blood of the Lord?* We read in Justin: ... *Just as Jesus Christ our Saviour was made flesh through the Word of God and took on flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, through the word of prayer... the food over which the Eucharist has been spoken becomes the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus, in order to nourish and transform our flesh and blood.*

Summing up, we can say: In the patristic period, these three modes of expression were not opposing conceptions of the Eucharist, but complementary ways of speaking about it. The Fathers of the Church explained the meaning of the Eucharistic prayers in their catechetical and theological works. In general, the Fathers of the Church considered the Eucharist as the memorial of the paschal mystery. Around this fundamental idea, the various elements of the Eucharistic mystery find their organic unity. Christ's memorial contains the event of salvation. The realism of the liturgical anamnesis, while preserving the unicity of the historical mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, ensures its presence and efficacy within the Church. In the sacrificial banquet instituted by Christ, the event of salvation becomes sacramentally present to the Church.

The Eucharistic Sacrifice:

1) Historically the concept of "offering" has grown out of the "memorial". The concept is found as early as in Justin and it reaches its elaborate expression in St. Augustine. 2) At the beginning of the third century, both the Latins and the Greeks alike spoke of the Eucharistic mystery in terms of sacrificial terminology. According to Tertullian, the Eucharistic celebration is the "offering of the sacrifice" and according to Origen, the Eucharistic sacrifice replaces the propitiatory sacrifices of Israel. 3) It is Cyprian who developed a theory of the "Eucharistic sacrifice". According to him, Christ's offering consisted in the surrender of himself in his passion and death; it is also the object of our sacrificial offering: "The sacrifice which we offer is the passion of the Lord". The Eucharist thus sacramentally re-presents the oblation of Christ's passion, which the Saviour originally presented to the Father. Hence the Eucharistic celebration is in effect, the offering of Christ and of His Church, because in the oblation of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the Church is united with Christ.

4) Cyril of Jerusalem taught that the Eucharist is a "spiritual sacrifice" offered in an "unbloody manner". 5) St. John Chrysostom commenting on the uniqueness of

the sacrifice of Christ, tells us that the Eucharist is the representation of Christ's sacrifice. It is the same Jesus Christ we offer always. The victim is always the same, so that the sacrifice is one. We do not each time offer different sacrifice, as did the high priest of old, but always the same one; or rather we perpetually accomplish the memorial of a unique sacrifice. Christ, who once for all offered himself to God, now gives himself to the Church to be offered by her. The Church's oblation is the memorial and the re-presentation of Christ's. 6) According to Theodore of Mopsuestia, the Eucharist is the memorial of the one true sacrifice of Christ. It is the image and the representation of the eternal liturgy celebrated in the sanctuary of heaven by Christ the eternal high priest. 7) For St. Ambrose too the Eucharist is the earthly representation of Christ's eternal self-oblation in the heavenly sanctuary. Thus the priest's offering is con-joined with the perpetual intercession of the glorified Christ offering his death on behalf of us all.

8) Of all the Church Fathers, it is St. Augustine who offers the most elaborate formulation concerning the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharistic mystery. It is based on his theology of the sacraments. A sacrifice is made up of double elements, visible and invisible, ritual and spiritual. Normally the term 'sacrifice' applies to the outward sign of an interior disposition by which man seeks union with God: "the visible sacrifice is the sacrament, i.e., the sacred symbol of the invisible sacrifice". The inner disposition of the oblation remains the most important element, which gives the sacrifice "its truth". Hence, in some places Augustine would call "sacrifice" every action by which union with God is sought. The outward sign, sacrament of the interior sacrifice, is not however an empty sign; for the symbol is the thing symbolized itself in its outward expression and manifestation. Personal action and symbolic act are inseparable. Augustine applies this notion of sacrifice (as being an action at once interior and exterior) to Christ's paschal mystery. On Calvary, Christ offered himself unto death. This is the perfect sacrifice, fulfilling all the OT sacrifices. The visible sign of Christ's death is the perfect expression of the invisible sacrifice. In the Eucharist, Christians celebrate the memorial of Christ's sacrifice. This memorial is a sacrificial banquet in which Christ's body is offered and distributed to the participants. In this sacramental offering of His body and blood, Christ is the offerer and the oblation, the priest and the victim. At the same time, the Church is united with Christ's act of offering and together with Him becomes a victim of sacrifice offered to God. In what the Church offers, the Church itself is offered.

Conclusion: The sacrificial nature of the Eucharistic celebration is therefore to be found in the earliest strands of tradition and this tradition is practically universal. And this unanimity of the early Church carries considerable weight in the present ecumenical dialogue. "The whole Christian tradition when speaking of the Supper, makes use of sacrificial terminology... I find the NT terminology as well as the patristic unanimity too overwhelmingly in favour of the centrality of the sacrificial theme in a balanced Eucharistic Theology... Since the Eucharist is a sacrament of the sacrifice of Christ and a channel of the Church's sacrifice, it must also be interpreted in sacrificial categories". (J. von Allmen, Calvinist)

C. Eucharist in the Middle Ages

1) The patristic period had attained unity and synthesis in the Eucharistic doctrine and practice. Sacrifice and meal were harmonized; the intimate connection between Eucharistic mystery and the mystery of the Church was keenly perceived; the

sacramental presence of Christ was viewed in relation to the liturgical representation of the paschal mystery. Under the pressure of the theological challenges, this beautiful harmony was disrupted and a clear perception of the unity of the doctrine was obscured. At the same time, the Eucharistic practice underwent deep transformation, but not all with a correct theological perspective. However, this does not mean that the post-patristic era produced only negative effects in the theology and practice of Eucharist. From the viewpoint of doctrine, the controversies of the middle ages did result in a more precise enunciation of Christ's sacramental presence; though a one-sided insistence of the presence of Christ could lead to incomplete views. Similarly, the transformation of the Eucharistic practice, while it brought about a great increase in Eucharistic devotion, also had side effects by way of de-centration of the mystery. From the doctrinal viewpoint, the theological synthesis of St. Thomas may be considered as the most successful and positive; from the liturgical viewpoint, frequent celebration appears the most positive gain of the Middle Ages.

2) Among the three bodies of Christ, the physical, sacramental and the ecclesial, the first two, according to Augustine, pointed out the distinction between two periods of salvation-history: the Christ-event and the Church-era. As to the sacramental and ecclesial bodies of Christ, they were in Augustine's mind so correlated as to be absolutely inseparable. But in the middle ages, a new position came up as regards the sacramental ecclesial bodies of Christ. The mystery of Christ's sacramental presence is approached from a new angle. Much speculation centred on the question of the physical identity between the sacramental body and historical body; problems are raised in a way, which tends to overlook the sacramental nature of Christ's real presence in the sacrament. This new situation created new ways of speaking ordained to the defense of Christ's presence in the sacrament; the expression "mystical body" no longer referred to the sacramental body of Christ, but to his ecclesial body, the Church; as to the sacramental body, it is now called the "true body" (*verum corpus*) of Christ, with a view to insisting on the "reality" of this presence. Likewise, the term "communion" passes over from the Church-communion to the sacramental participation in Christ's body.

D. The Teaching of the Church

The present Catholic stress on the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist is to a very large extent the result of the anti-Protestant reaction that set in at the time of Luther and spread far and wide throughout Catholic Christendom. The time of Vatican II had not yet come. Serious theoretical distortions as well as incredible pastoral abuses had crept within the boundaries of the Church. It has rightly been said that polemics always produce very bad theology, and this applies to a large extent to that stormy period. Eventually Catholic doctrine crystallized in the dogmatic decrees of the Council of Trent, which are marked by sharpness and extreme clarity of expression as well as by a noticeably polemical, defensive attitude against the vicious Protestant onslaught. Trent too is a creature of history and a product of the times, an important landmark in the course of the Church's history, but only one landmark.

1. Luther's views on the Mass. His views on the subject are rather complex and certainly not so simple as some Catholic authors would make them to be. On the one hand:

a) He admits certain aspects of the Mass: "We should therefore give careful heed to this word sacrifice . . . We are to offer Him praise and thanksgiving with our whole

heart, for his unspeakable, sweet grace and mercy, which He has promised and given in this sacrament.. To be sure, this sacrifice of prayer, praise and thanksgiving and of ourselves as well, we are not to present before God in our own person. But we are to lay it upon Christ and let Him present it for us, as St Paul teaches us in Heb 13,15. We do not offer Christ as a sacrifice but Christ offers us. And in this way it is permissible, yes, profitable, to call the Mass a sacrifice; not on its own account, but because we offer ourselves as a sacrifice along with Christ. . If the Mass were so understood and for this reason, called a sacrifice, it would be well.

"Few, however, understand the Mass in this way. Therefore the Mass has been instituted that we may come together and offer such sacrifice in common. So it is that I also offer Christ, and that I desire and believe that He presents it to God in his own Person: and in order to strengthen this faith of mine He has given me a token that He will do it. This token is the sacrament of "bread and wine". (From the 'Treatise on the NT', 1520).

These are his views in July 1520, a few months before his formal excommunication (Jan. 1521). The Mass would, be a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving but nothing is said about its propitiatory nature.

b) On the other hand, he rejects violently the sacrificial character of the Eucharist, and approximately at the same time. He considers the Mass to be a testament (in the juridical sense of last will) and, therefore not a sacrifice, for a sacrifice we offer, but a last will we receive. "Out of the sacrament and testament of God, which ought to be a good gift received, they (Catholics) have made for themselves a good deed performed, which then they give to others and offer up to God" (From 'The Babylonian Captivity', 1520).

c) As for the reasons for this rejection:

i) Catholic pastoral practice at that time: Luther reacts vehemently against the multiplication of Masses for the dead, against the silent Mass, against the Latin Mass, the private Mass, the 'buying' and 'selling' of Masses and the abuses connected, with this practice. But deeper than this:

ii) Scriptural reason: The NT in general and the text of the Institution in particular do not call the Eucharist a sacrifice and we should follow this scriptural testimony. Besides, the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist goes counter to Heb 10:10, according to which Christ offered only once, namely on the Cross. Therefore the sacrificial nature of the Mass would be derogatory to the true sacrifice of the Cross and to its absolute unicity.

iii) Theologically, the Mass can in no way "be called a sacrifice. For sacrifice is practically identifiable with propitiatory sacrifice and this in turn implies the reconciliation of an angry God by means of the Mass: "They (the papists) invent for themselves a false god of their own minds, a god who is angry and requires reconciling" (Works, 36,176), whereas in reality God is "always gracious and merciful" (Ibid.175). Hence both a narrow conception of sacrifice and a different conception of God lie behind his rejection of the Eucharistic sacrifice. For Luther, the Mass is God's gift to man, not man's gift to God.

2. Tridentine doctrine: The Council begins to discuss the question in 1551, after the 13th session on the RP. First the Protestant errors are collected:

i) "The Mass is not a sacrifice nor is it an offering for sin, but only a commemoration of the sacrifice of the Cross; it is called sacrifice by the Fathers only in the broad sense, but in reality it is not a sacrifice but only a testament and a promise for the remission of sin" (from Luther).

ii. "It is a blasphemy to the most holy sacrifice of Christ performed on the Cross, to believe that the Son of God is again offered to the Father by priests at the Mass; and to say that Christ is mystically offered and immolated for us, means nothing else than Christ is given to us to be eaten" (Luther)

All the theologians consider that these propositions should be condemned as heretical. The Council decides to grant the Protestant request that some of the Reformers be present at the deliberations as observers. For this reason the session is postponed and the Council adjourned sine die.

In 1562 the subject is taken up again. In this general sacrificial context the decisive issue is the sacrificial character of the last Supper, for on this will depend the sacrificial nature of the Mass. In the final decree the essential connection between the Cross and the Mass is established from a triple point of view:

- a) The Mass is the memorial of the Cross (but this is left undeveloped).
- b) The Mass applies the fruits of Calvary to the Church
- c) The Mass re-presents the sacrifice of the Cross (of CF 1546). This representation of Calvary in the Eucharist is further clarified by the double identity of priest and victim:

Identity of Priest: The priest in both the sacrifices (the Cross and the Mass) is the same, namely Christ. But the Council never says that the Mass is offered directly by Christ, but rather that it is offered "by the Church" (CF 1546) or "through the ministry of priests"(CF 1548); and to this extent the original Christic sacrifice becomes now ecclesial.

Identity of victim: This is more clearly and forcefully expressed. Christ was the victim on the Cross and He is now the victim "to be offered by the Church" (CF 1546); Christ "is offered now in an unbloody manner" (CF 1548). From this substantial identity of the victim both the propitiatory and the intercessory nature of the Mass are deduced (CF 1548).

The Protestant position is directly rejected in canons 1,3 and 4 (CF 1555, 1557, 1558).

Therefore only the following propositions are covered by the authority of the Council: i) There is an essential link between the Cross and the Mass on account of the double identity of offerer and victim. ii) The Mass commemorates, represents the Cross and applies its fruits. iii) The Supper has an essential reference to both the Cross and the Mass. The rest is left to the theologians to explain.

Against the reformers, the Council affirms the sacrificial value of the Mass and its propitiatory character. The Mass is "a true and proper sacrifice offered to God" (1555). The Council does not give a precise definition of sacrifice, though it supposes everywhere that a sacrifice implies an act of oblation. Preoccupied with meeting the difficulties of the reformers, the Council stresses the essential relatedness of the Mass to Christ's sacrifice, which remains unique and absolute. Hence in Chapter 1 (1546,

1547), there is a long development on the priesthood of Christ and his sacrifice, and further on, the meaning of the Last Supper as institution and commission given by Christ to the Church, to celebrate liturgically the memorial of his historical sacrifice; this liturgical commemoration is a sacrificial action. The sacrifice of Christ is unique, perfect and complete. Henceforward, there can be no new sacrifice. All that remains possible is a sacramental oblation of the sacrifice once accomplished. Christ intended such a sacramental oblation, so that he might leave to his beloved spouse, the Church a visible sacrifice such as the nature of man requires. With this end in view, he instituted under the signs of bread and wine the sacrificial representation in which the memorial of the bloody sacrifice of the cross is celebrated.

Chapter II goes on to explain that in the sacrifice of the Mass "the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner" (1548). The essential relatedness of the sacrifice of the Mass to that of the cross, the identity and distinction between each, are marked here: the priest and the victim are the same; therefore the sacrifice remains one. On the other hand, while on the cross, Christ offered his sacrificial immolation by himself, he offers now through the priests the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass. Both the sacrifices stand, but on an essentially different level: the cross, unique and supreme; the Mass under the cross and subordinate to it.

In a way one of the most peculiar characteristics of the Council of Trent was its strong insistence that besides being a sacrifice of praise, supplication, and thanksgiving, the Mass is also strictly a sacrifice of propitiation for the forgiveness of sins. Apparently from the very start the bishops gathered in council were convinced that the Mass is indeed a sacrifice of propitiation, and on this point they displayed a remarkably united front. The dissension arose in their ranks when they tried to produce a really convincing argument to support their contention. After a prolonged discussion they finally settled on one line of reasoning whose extreme simplicity compelled at the end general acceptance: the cross and the Mass are both propitiatory because both have the same victim, Christ. And so the identity of the victim decides the issue and brings the endless flow of episcopal eloquence to an end. Jesus died on the cross as a victim of propitiation for the sins of humankind and the very same victim is still offered on the Church's altars at the Eucharistic celebration. Hence, the sacrifice of the Mass is equally propitiatory, a sacrifice at which God "pardons wrongdoings and sins, even grave ones" (CF 1548).

The deficiencies in the final decree are the result of the faulty Christology on which it is based. Nothing is said about the resurrection and the acceptance of the victim of the Cross and consequently this essential aspect is also absent from the Council's treatment of the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

Aftermath of Trent in Catholic Theology

The Council of Trent had been led by historical circumstances to put emphasis on the "real presence of Christ" under the Eucharistic species on the one hand and on the sacrificial value of the Mass on the other. While the doctrine of presence and sacrifice were elaborated, the Eucharistic meal received no treatment of its own. After Trent, catholic theology kept mostly to the approach adopted by the Council. The

distinction between the "sacrament of the Eucharist" and the "sacrifice of the Mass" became classical. But there was no organic view of the Eucharistic mystery as a sacramental sacrificial meal. Theological explanations were now sought to account for the fact that the "real presence" of Christ on the altar is accompanied by a true sacrificial action. Hence the many sacrificial theories which issued from post-Tridentine theology. We have two groups of theories: the immolation theories and the oblation theories.

a) Immolation theories: They consider the immolation of the victim as the essence of the sacrifice. Now the problem concerning the Mass as sacrifice is: what action takes place at the Mass, which can be understood as an immolation of the victim. Some looked for a physical change. Thus, for instance, the physical change undergone by the species is interpreted as destruction; or else, it is pointed out that the sacramental reality of Christ, realized by the consecration is "destroyed" in communion (Bellarmine). According to some others, Christ's Eucharistic presence puts him in a "state of abasement" equivalent to death. Others sought for a figure or symbol of Christ's immolation. The separation of the species, the fraction of the bread, the sacramental communion, are all at one time or another considered as figures of Christ's immolation. Double consecration also was considered as symbolic of immolation.

b) Oblation theories: Conscious of the artificial character of the immolation theories, more recent authors shift the essence of sacrifice from the immolation to the oblation. An act of oblation is therefore required and suffices to account for the sacrificial character of the Mass. This is open to various interpretations: i) the essence of sacrifice consists merely in the interior act of oblation: the Mass is a sacrifice simply because Christ's "eternal sacrifice" or lasting interior self-oblation is made present on the altar, ii) A ritual oblation, expressive of an interior disposition, is of the essence of the sacrifice. At the last supper, Christ offered ritually his forthcoming death; which thus acquired sacrificial character; now the Church offers ritually Christ made present under the species in his "state of victimhood". The last supper formed together with the cross a unique sacrifice; the Mass is sacrificial because it implies a ritual offering of Christ by the Church. Therefore, in so far as it is essentially related to the cross Last Supper, Calvary and the Mass are inseparable.

Vatican II: Constitution on the Liturgy (1963)

a) The Eucharist in general: There is a remarkable change of atmosphere with regard to Trent: now the Eucharist; is set in an almost; heavenly context and therefore Mass is no longer restricted to the aspect of Christ's death:

In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, a minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle (cf. Rev 21:2; Col 3:1; Heb 8:2); we sing a hymn to the Lord's glory with all the warriors of the heavenly army; venerating the memory of the saints, we hope for some part and fellowship with them; we eagerly await the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, until he, our life, shall appear and we too will appear with him in glory (cf. Phil 3:20; Col 3:4) (SC 8)

b) Explicitly on the Mass. The Eucharistic sacrifice perpetuates the sacrifice of the Cross. Completing the conception of Pius XII, who had defined the Mass as the memorial of Christ's death, the Council defines it as "the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection" (the full text in CF 1575). Hence the aspect of Christ's glorification, left out by Trent, is brought out explicitly.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Christ's death and resurrection, is the decisive act, both interior and exterior, spiritual and concretely expressed, in which, renouncing all things, even his own human life, he dedicates himself, consecrates himself (Jn 17:19) entirely to the Father. Christ passes through the mystery of his death in a spirit of perfect dedication to his Father, and through his resurrection attains to perfect union with him. In so far as death, the wage of sin, implies a break in the nature of man, Christ accepts this supreme trial in a spirit of entire self-renunciation; in so far as death is the supreme act which sums up his entire human life, he posits it in a spirit total attachment to the Father. Thus his act of dying is the decisive expression of his will to be with God, the perfect exteriorisation of his sacrificial spirit. His glorious resurrection is the consummation, the realization of his search for union.

The sacrifice of Christ is the perfect sacrifice. Christ offers his sacrificial death, as the Word incarnate, head of the human race. He passes unto the Father as the representative of all people. In the mystery of his Passover, the end of sacrifice is, in principle already attained for the entire human race: humanity is re-united with God in the person of their representative. Man's redemption is accomplished through an efficacious and decisive sacrifice. The glory of Christ's risen humanity is for all people the reality of salvation.

Christ's sacrifice thus sums up and transcends all historical sacrifices offered by human beings to God. It accomplished in fact the union with God, which all other sacrifices sought without ever being able to establish it. As the one efficacious sacrifice, by which man's union with God is realized, it fulfils the religious aspirations, which have been expressed in all historical religions through the offering of sacrifices to God. Theologically, all historical sacrifices, Jewish and non-Jewish, must be understood in relation to the perfect sacrifice of Christ, in the mystery of his Passover to the Father as representative of all people.

Sacrifice, belongs to the realm of signs. It is an exterior act of cult, directed to express man's dedication and sacrificial disposition towards God. Two elements must therefore be distinguished in every sacrifice: the interior and the exterior, the sign and the signified. Of the two elements, which make up a true sacrificial action, the interior act, in a sense, is the most important, for the ritual offering is a lie if it does not express a personal act of oblation. Nonetheless, the interior act of self-oblation becomes strictly sacrificial in so far as precisely as it is expressed and carried by a ritual offering. The cultic act of self-oblation is no empty sign; rather it is a symbolic action, in which the sacrificial disposition of the worshipper is contained and by which it is actuated. If the sacrifice is to take up its full meaning, the person's self-gift must be expressed sensibly.

Thus sacrifice is a gift offering made to God, through which man's self-offering finds a concrete ritual expression. The gift, which is made, is symbolic of the giver's dedication to God; similarly, the acceptance of the gift on God's part is symbolic of the gracious acceptance of the giver. The last and adequate end of every sacrifice is union with God. In this search for union, the various ends of the sacrifice - to give praise and thanks to God, to adore him, to ask for his blessings and to seek his pardon - are implied.

The Council of Trent explains the meaning of the Last Supper as follows: "Christ offered up to God the Father his own body and blood under the form of bread and wine", "so that he might leave to his beloved spouse the Church a visible sacrifice", that "the bloody sacrifice once to be accomplished on the cross might be represented, the memorial thereof remain even to the end of the world", "that they (the apostles) might partake" of the memorial of his death and resurrection (CF 1546). Hence we can say: The Last Supper is not directed precisely to making Christ's death sacrificial: rather it is ordained to the sacramental re-presentation in the Church of one redemptive sacrifice. The intention of Christ in the institution of the Eucharist was to unite the Church sacramentally to the event of salvation. To this effect, the redemptive sacrifice to be accomplished once for all was made sacramentally present in the Lord's Supper. By repeating the rites instituted by Christ, the Church would have a sacrifice to offer to God "as the nature of man requires" (Trent); yet this sacrifice would be none other than the sacramental re-presentation of the unique redemptive sacrifice.

At the Last Supper Christ was thus assuming all the religious aspirations towards union with God expressed in the sacrifices of humanity, and he fulfilled them by entrusting the Church with the sacramental re-presentation of the, perfect and efficacious sacrifice. Already re-united with God through Christ's Passover, by which the new covenant of God with man has been sealed once for all, Church passes unto God in reality through the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice. For, in it, the Church is assumed into Christ's own Passover and the New Covenant becomes for the Church a concrete reality.

On the other hand, the identity of the Mass with the Last Supper must be stressed. In compliance with the commission received from Christ, the Church does precisely what Christ himself did at the Last Supper. If her liturgical celebration of the Eucharistic mystery contains the sacramental re-presentation of Christ's sacrifice, the reason is that Christ inserted it into the ritual, which he instituted and performed. Admittedly, Christ performed in advance the ritual of his sacrifice, while the Church celebrates the sacrifice already accomplished once for all. In the cenacle, the presentation took place by way of anticipation; the Church does it by way of memorial. Hence it is said: the Lord's Supper is the oblation of the victim to be immolated; the Mass is the oblation of the victim once immolated. In both cases however, the reality of the Paschal Mystery is contained under the sacramental signs. The Mass is exactly the act in which the Church re-lives the mystery of the first "Lord's Supper".

By passing through the mystery of his death and resurrection, Christ not only became for all the "source of eternal salvation" (Heb 5:9); he is also "living for ever to intercede for all who come to God through him" (Heb 7:25). Therefore, in his glorious humanity, Christ - who now has reached beyond time - is fixed in a lasting act of self-

oblation to the Father; better still, the disposition of self-oblation with which he passed through his Paschal Mystery once for all has become eternalised in him. The risen Christ is not simply a glorified victim of sacrifice; he offers himself eternally to the Father. It is clear that this continuing self-oblation involves on the part of Christ no new action; much less does it suppose a repetition of the historical mystery. Rather, Christ's act of self-renunciation and attachment to God, expressed perfectly in the mystery of his Passover, has attained in his glory permanency and fixation. In his glory, Christ is united to God as turned towards him and offering himself to him. His union with the Father is the permanent seal imprinted on his self-oblation. In the eternal act of Christ's glorification, his death itself is actualised, for, the glorification of Christ is nothing else than the act of death in its radiant termination. The redemptive act, unique and permanent, the gift of himself through filial obedience to the Father for the salvation of the world is eternalised in the heart of the glorious Christ.

Thus Christ is, in his glory, the high priest of a heavenly liturgy. The Eucharistic sacrifice very precisely makes this heavenly liturgy sacramentally present to the Church. Becoming present as turned towards the Father in an enduring act of self-oblation, Christ draws the Church into the mystery of his own Passover. The Church is united with him in his act of self-surrender to God; the Church's act of oblation being assumed into his own, the Church follows after Christ in his paschal mystery. Thus the mystery of the new covenant is actualised for the Church. Thus the Eucharistic mystery is directly the sacrament of the heavenly liturgy, which eternalises the mystery of Christ's Passover, not of the historical event of the paschal mystery itself. It is to be maintained that Christ does not merely give himself to the Church to offer but draws the Church sacramentally into his own lasting self-oblation. The Eucharistic sacrifice is a sacramental sacrifice in so far as it makes the heavenly liturgy of the glorious High Priest sacramentally present. Christ offers himself through the Church, drawing her and making her enter into his self-oblation.

By passing through the mystery of his death and resurrection, Christ has offered once for all a perfect and efficacious sacrifice. To this the Eucharistic sacrifice can add nothing by way of accomplishing men's redemption. What newness then does it bring about? It is accepted that the Eucharistic sacrifice is essentially related to the historical sacrifice of Christ, the absolute sacrifice. But the "how" of this relatedness is to be explained. We can say that the Eucharistic sacrifice directly re-presents the heavenly liturgy performed by the glorified Christ. Between the Paschal Mystery and the Eucharistic Mystery, the relation is one of historical event to sacramental representation; however, this re-representation takes place through the mediation of the heavenly sacrifice offered by the Risen Lord. The Eucharistic sacrifice makes the historical sacrifice of Christ sacramentally present in so far as this endures in trans-historical form in the glorified humanity. Historical event and sacramental presence: such is the unity and distinction between the absolute sacrifice of Christ's Passover and the relative sacrifice of the Church's Eucharist. However, the sacramental representation of a sacrifice is not an independent sacrificial event; the representation differs from the event. The Mass is a sacrificial action as re-representation of the sacrificial event of Christ's paschal mystery.

THE REAL PRESENCE OF THE GLORIFIED CHRIST

The Theology of Presence

Theology has gained much from the exploration of what 'presence' means for modern man. The concept of a specific 'personal' presence enables us to see greater depths of meaning in the different forms of presence. In each sacrament, Christ meets the Church as well as the individual. Christ is present in the sacraments as the head of his mystical body. The individual who receives a sacrament meets not only Christ but also his Church. At the same time, there is a deepening of understanding of Christ's sacramental presence, by which Christ meets the individual in a person-to-person relationship.

In the Eucharist, we see that Christ is present not only to the individual but also to his Church, and that his presence is always a 'personal' presence. In our turn, we are present to Christ in the Eucharist, first as his people, and then as individual members of his mystical body. Christ in his glorified body meets his people, both as a community and as individuals, in a person-to-person encounter in the Eucharist. In the past there was a tendency to look on the sacraments more as 'things', less as a series of 'personal encounters' between Christ and the individual Christian.

A 'personal' presence is different in kind, not merely in degrees, from the presence of things to things. The presence of a thing to a thing can be measured in terms of physical proximity, or of effective physical, chemical or biological action. The first is static, the second is dynamic. Personal presence, on the other hand, is the presence of a person, *acting as a person*, to another person or persons. A person does not always act as a person: there is for example the presence to each other of patients asleep in the same hospital ward, or of a rush-hour crowd in a train. This kind of non-personal presence can be measured in the same way as the presence of things to things.

The specific difference between these two kinds of presence lies in the fact of personal communication. In the case of personal presence: there is giving and receiving at the personal level. This kind of presence can only be dynamic. To be fully personal, personal presence must be active. Two people in a queue may rub shoulders with each other, and yet be in no sense personally involved with each other. They are not then 'personally' present to each other.

It is important to notice, however, that persons remain persons even when they are not acting fully as persons. Personal presence does not create personality; it presupposes it. A person does not become a person by acting as a person. One cannot be said to be only potentially a person before one acts as a person. This would be the pernicious philosophy behind one kind of argument in favour of abortion and euthanasia. On this thinking, the child in the womb is not a person, only potentially a person, and the dying patient has ceased to be a person if he or she is incapable of acting as a person. Communication between persons can be either unilateral or mutual. Obviously, if it is to be mutual, there must be, on one side, the effective desire

and ability to communicate personally, and, on the other, an openness and ability to receive what is communicated.

Three kinds of personal presence

Here we must distinguish three kinds of personal presence. A clear understanding of them is of very great importance in the theology of the Eucharistic presence of Christ.

1. Presence 'in spirit' is the highest element in personal presence. It arises when there is true 'communion' of spirit, a 'marriage of true minds', through knowledge and, above all, through love. This kind of presence is so important to full personal presence that, it can be spoken of as 'presence' even when the persons involved are physically separated from each other. Two lovers are said to be 'present' to each other 'in spirit' when their thoughts and affections are wholly given over to each other. Notice, however, that we are speaking of the natural order of things, not of grace. God's presence in the order of grace is not just 'in spirit' but 'in the Holy Spirit': it is accompanied by the gift - the very presence - of the Spirit, and of grace. The Holy Spirit is made present - actively and personally present - in a way impossible to nature.

2. Presence 'in sign' adds a new dimension to presence 'in spirit'. By means of sign-language, presence 'in spirit' is given a more personal expression, leading to more perfect communication. A letter is a tangible token from one person to another, making concrete and visible the relationship between them. Letters expressing a deep relationship are kept and treasured. They are a sign of something deeply personal. A sign can be a sign to the mind, or to the heart, or to both. A sign can inform: it can then be described as a 'cognitive' sign, i.e. a sign that conveys information. This kind of sign can lead to fuller personal knowledge. A sign can be a gesture of love: it can then be described as an 'affective' sign, i.e. a sign that reveals the affection and love of a person. This kind of sign can lead to a fuller personal communication, e.g. by gifts given or exchanged.

Presence 'in sign' is measured by the degree of identification of the person with the sign. Where the sign is 'cognitive', presence is measured by the degree of self-revelation contained in the sign. Where the sign is 'affective', presence is measured by the degree of self-giving, sincerity and love manifested by the sign.

3. The third kind of personal presence is presence 'in body'. This kind of presence has obviously a very deep and personal meaning in human friendship and especially in marriage. The physical presence together of two human beings is not, of course, the most perfect element in full personal presence, because pride of place must always be given to presence 'in spirit'. But it is an indispensable element in the fullest kind of personal presence that is possible in the natural order. Two lovers can never be satisfied with only the first two kinds of presence. In the natural order, all other personal presences ('in spirit' and 'in sign') are analogous only. The norm of personal presence is presence 'in body'. To be fully personal, presence 'in the body' must be accompanied by at least presence 'in spirit'.

Suggestive Foreshadowing

Obviously the presence of God to his people did not start with the Eucharist. If there is something that the Israelite is utterly convinced of, it is precisely this reality of God's presence, all pervading, penetrating, and encompassing the whole earth. The mantle of his presence constantly envelops Saints and sinners alike. This is powerfully expressed by Ps 139: 7-12:

Where could I go to escape from you? Where could I get away from your presence? If I went up to heaven, you would be there; if I lay down in the world of the dead, you would be there. If I flew away beyond the east or lived in the farthest place in the west, you would be there to lead me, you would be there to help me. I could ask the darkness to help me or the light around me to turn into night, but even darkness is not dark for you, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are the same for you.

And yet, in spite of all this all-pervading presence of God, the Israelite knows that there are certain places to which a very intimate, very special divine presence is attached. For, after all, the very concept of presence admits of degrees, there can be a strong overwhelming presence and a weak, diffused presence. The religious sense of the Israelite has always singled out privileged places, which seem to be particularly blessed with a special presence of the Almighty. The intimacy and close proximity of God's presence is felt by Moses primarily in the so-called **Tent of meeting**, where God speaks to him. "And everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting . . . When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the door of the tent, and the Lord would speak to Moses. Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (Ex 33: 7-11).

At other times, the presence of Yahweh is not symbolized by a pillar of cloud but rather by his divine glory or splendour: "There (at the tent) I shall meet with the people of Israel and it shall be sanctified by my glory" (Ex 29: 42). God's incredible proximity to and familiarity with Moses is visible even externally on the latter's face: "When Moses came down from Mount Sinai . . . (he) did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God" (Ex 34: 29). The presence of the Lord was so intense that the divine effulgence was reflected on Moses' own face. "And the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the door of the tent and called Aaron and Miriam...Moses is entrusted with my entire house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in dark speech; and he beholds the form of the Lord" (Num 12: 5-8). The pillar of cloud covering the Tent, the splendour of God enveloping it: both visible signs of the Lord's presence, a presence, however, that, though intense, is only transitory, not yet permanent.

Access to the Tent of meeting seems to have been the exclusive privilege of Moses. In contrast to this, the **Ark of the Covenant** was built as a meeting place between Yahweh and all the sons of Israel: "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. Then you shall make a mercy-seat of pure gold . . . And you shall put the mercy-seat on top of the ark . . . There I will meet with you and from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim that are upon the ark, I will speak with you of all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel" (Ex 2: 8,17, 21,22). Once built, the Ark is considered to be the permanent residence of

Yahweh during the journey through the desert, until it finally entered Jerusalem under King David (2 Sam 6).

At a further stage of development both Ark and Tent are fused into the Tent where the Ark is kept. Now two distinct signs of God's presence are conflated into one, where the divine presence is manifested mainly through the *divine kabod*, the Lord's glory, effulgence or splendour, often associated with the brightness of fire. "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle . . . For throughout their journey the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of the house of Israel" (Ex 40: 34-38). The splendour of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Once the Promised Land is reached, the Ark is placed in the Jerusalem Temple, built by Solomon. Now the cloud fills the Temple as it had before filled the Tent. The Lord had promised centuries earlier: "But you shall seek the place which the Lord your God will choose out of all your tribes to.. .make his habitation there; thither you shall go" (Deut 12: 5). The magnificent Jerusalem Temple is the place of the *shekkinah*, the dwelling place of Yahweh, which is meant to express God's benevolence to his people. This intimate association between the material structure of the Temple and God's spiritual presence had led the Israelites to believe that the Temple enjoyed the divine guarantee of indestructibility, that the house of God would last for ever. But this was not to be. The Temple, sign of God's presence among his people, was destroyed and rebuilt and destroyed again, this time not to be rebuilt.

The Temple was no more, but paradoxically, after its final destruction God's presence to his people not only did not diminish, it rather increased in intensity. Jesus had already announced it immediately after the cleansing of the Temple: "Destroy this temple and in three days I shall raise it up. . . ;but he was speaking of the temple of his body" (Jn 2: 19-20). **Jesus' body** becomes the new temple of God, and it is this body, dwelling place of God, that is given to the Church to eat and drink. The edible body of Jesus has become the personal vehicle of God's real presence among his people. By comparison the splendours of the Tent, the Ark and the Temple fade into insignificance. The distant foreshadowing, however suggestive, is outshone by the reality of the Eucharistic presence.

Eucharistic Presence

The sacramental presence in and to the Church of the event of salvation accomplished through Christ is the immediate effect of every Eucharistic celebration. It is therefore, the *res et sacramentum* of the eucharistic sacrifice, viz., the sacramental effect, which by nature, is orientated to active assimilation and to personal appropriation. The eucharistic "*res et sacramentum*" is not limited to the "real presence" of Christ's body and blood under the species of bread and wine. Its full reality is the presence of the paschal mystery to the Church in the sacrament of the sacrificial meal instituted by Christ. The sacramental presence of Christ is interior to and essentially related to the presence of the paschal mystery. The "real presence" is not an end in itself: resulting always from the sacramental presence of Christ's

sacrifice, it always looks towards the sacrificial meal in which Christ is shared. It is on the basis of his sacrificial death made present sacramentally, that the Lord himself becomes present, and not the other way round. It is Christ's sacrificial death (paschal mystery), which is made present, that is a real happening, and not so much a static form of Christ, divorced from his deed of redemption. Proper focusing and right orientation seem essential for a correct understanding of the nature and appreciation of the significance of Christ's eucharistic presence. Its essential relatedness to the Eucharistic sacrificial meal must be kept in mind at every stage.

1. The Eucharistic celebration is the sacramental re-presentation of the mystery of the glorified Christ. In it Christ assumes the Church into his act of self-oblation and imparts to the Church a share in the fullness of his divine life. In the sacramental re-presentation of his mystery, Christ himself is present. He is present as the principal agent of the sacrificial action and of the communication of grace. Moreover, he himself is at once the victim offered in sacrifice and shared in a sacred banquet. Hence a specific and unique modality of presence is involved here on the part of Christ: He is not merely present through his action and power, but in substance.

2. The sacramental presence of Christ's substance in the Eucharist is a mystery, which "we can scarcely express in words" (Council of Trent). Hence the task of theology is not to explain it, but to discover its *raison-d'être* and function, in order to make it intelligible in the context of the entire Eucharistic mystery. To this effect, the "true, real and substantial" presence of Christ's body and blood must be viewed in a personalistic perspective. The sacramental presence of Christ in the Eucharistic mystery is the climax of his personal presence to the Church. It is the utmost embodiment of self-communication on the part of Christ.

3. Christ, whose glorified humanity has reached beyond the conditions space and time, still communicate with us in a human way through the Church's symbolic gestures. In particular, a Eucharistic celebration is a revelatory event in which Christ communicates personally here and now with a liturgical assembly. A progressive and ever deeper self-communication marks in fact the liturgical unfolding of the Eucharistic celebration. The assembly of worship itself, as the liturgical gathering' up by Christ of his members marks the first stage of his real and personal presence among them. This presence passes then through various stages, being gradually intensified, in order to reach its climax in the sacramental partaking of his body and blood. With the substantial presence of Christ as the victim of sacrifice shared in a sacred banquet, self-communication and personal presence at once culminate.

4. The truth of Christ's progressive self-communication and consequently of his manifold real presence in the Eucharistic celebration is given full recognition in, the, recent documents of the Church. The gradual revelation of this presence: first of all, Christ is seen to be present among the faithful gathered in his name; then in His Word, as the Scriptures are read and explained; in the person of the minister; finally, and in a unique way, under the species of the Eucharist, which is a presence par excellence. From the outset, then, Christ is present in the Eucharistic assembly with a view to personal encounter. In the liturgical celebration, everything is directed to the sacramental encounter with the paschal mystery.

THE MANIFOLD PRESENCE OF CHRIST

It has been said for a long time that Jesus is present in heaven and in the tabernacle. Catholics certainly did not thereby deny that Christ is present in the Church in other ways too; but for all practical purposes we seem to have bracketed all these other forms of presence and narrowly concentrated only on the Eucharistic presence, since as long as our pilgrimage lasts the other form of heavenly presence is obviously out of reach.

It is Vatican II that has broadened it considerably by reminding us of other forms of Christic presence besides the Eucharistic presence. Soon after the Council, Pope Paul VI expanded the doctrine still further. The Council had spoken of four different forms of Christic presence and the Pope added three more. Obviously, the number is immaterial, for even Paul VI's longer list could still be lengthened. The important thing is not to supply an exhaustive enumeration of forms of Christic presence but rather to place all of them emphatically within an ecclesial context. For primarily it is the entire body of the Church that is the beneficiary of these forms of divine presence, rather than the individual Christian as Christ is present in the midst of a prayerful community, in virtue of Jesus' promise, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them" (Mt 18,20). It is not only bread and wine that are the vehicles of Christ's presence, but the Christian community as well. It is this particular form of presence that is stressed nowadays in the contemporary charismatic movement, one of whose most characteristic features is precisely the prayer meetings, pervaded by a deep realization of Christ's presence in the midst of the prayerful assembly. Furthermore, Christ is also present in the poor and afflicted, with a form of presence so intense that it almost borders on an identification between Christ and the poor: "I was hungry and you gave me food Whatever you did to one of my brethren you did it to me" (Mt 25:35.40).

Moreover, Christ is also present in the heart of the baptized Christian through living faith. Paul prays for his Christians at Ephesus: "I bow my knees before the Father... that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Eph 3:14.17). Over and above this presence through faith, Jesus is also present through the instrumentality of the word. The word of God becomes then another vehicle of Christic presence. Christ is also present in the Church's pastors who govern in the name of Christ, in keeping with Jesus' promise to the Eleven immediately before his ascension, "I am with you always to the close of the age" (Mt 28:20). He is present in the sacraments too, and present when the sacrificial memorial of his redemptive work is offered on the altar. And so, Christ is present in the community and in the poor; he is present through faith in the heart of the believer, as well as in the word, the pastors, the sacraments and the Eucharistic sacrifice. Yet in the midst of this rich, diverse presence of Christ, there is one particular form of presence that stands out far above all others: his Eucharistic presence. Christ's Eucharistic presence is almost like the sun, with all the other forms of Christic presence like satellites turning around that central star.

We are usually so dazzled by the splendours of Jesus' Eucharistic presence, so taken up by this incredible reality, as to be almost blinded to certain essential elements surrounding it. The real presence is brought about in the midst of a

worshipping community where Christ was already present through faith; and it is effected in a sacramental action by the efficacy of the word. Our usual terminology is not particularly commendable. Unreflectively we go on speaking of Christ's 'real presence' in the Eucharist, reserving this expression exclusively to his Eucharistic presence, as if the other forms of presence were not real. In reality all the seven different forms of Christic presence in the Church are real. They are not at all imaginary. Yet the Eucharistic presence stands supreme, for besides being real and personal, it is also substantial and this can be predicated only of his Eucharistic presence.

The Present Ecumenical Situation

There may still be differences between Catholics and other Christians concerning other aspects of the Eucharist, but with regard specifically to the real presence the difference in most cases is definitely narrowing. Luther himself was always a staunch defender of the RP. With regard to the duration of the RP, he seems to have hesitated. He denies the RP outside the liturgical action. Melancton similarly defends Christ's presence as 'true and substantial', but the RP is limited to the time of communion. Carlstadt seems to have been the first to deny the RP, soon followed by Zwingli and Oecolampadius. According to them, in the Eucharist we receive only a symbol, for the sake of fostering our faith. The bread simply represents the body of Christ, and the wine his blood.

The last 25 years have been characterized by numerous bilateral agreements (both eucharistic and non-eucharistic) between the various Christian Churches. A few years ago the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission, officially appointed by their respective authorities in Rome and Canterbury, issued an agreed statement on the Eucharist in which we read: "The elements are not mere signs; Christ's body and blood become really present and are really given.... Through this prayer of thanksgiving... the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ by the action of the Holy Spirit, so that in communion we eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood" Similarly remarkable is the agreement we have recently reached with the Lutheran Church: "In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is present wholly and entirely, in his body and blood, under the signs of bread and wine".

Much more remarkable is the recent document on the Eucharist published, by the World Council of Churches after the international meeting of the Faith and Order Commission held at Lima, Peru, in January 1982. There we read the following: "The Spirit makes the crucified and risen Lord really present to us in the eucharistic meal fulfilling the promise contained in the words of institution. The presence of Christ is really the centre of the Eucharist... It is in virtue of the living word of Christ that the bread and wine become the sacramental signs of Christ's body and blood. They remain so for the purpose of communion".

However, this agreement among the Christian Churches as regards the doctrine of the real presence is not yet complete. Even within this fairly restricted area, there are still two points of contention: the exact moment in the course of the

liturgical celebration when this presence starts and—far more important because of the spiritual and pastoral consequences associated with it—when it ends.

For many centuries now Catholics have believed and unreflectively taken for granted that Christ begins to be present under the signs of bread and wine at the so-called 'moment of consecration.' 'This is my body, this is my blood.' None of the other Christian Churches holds this. The majority of them share with us a common belief in the dogma of the real presence, but none of them — absolutely none — believes that the beginning of Jesus' Eucharistic presence can be pinpointed with such mathematical accuracy.

At the Last Supper the expression "This is my body, this is my blood" very likely was not a formula of consecration but of distribution. There are clear indications, which strongly suggest that on that occasion the formula was not consecratory, but only indicative of the consecration already effected previously. In the narrative of Mark, the formula "This is my blood" occurs after the Twelve have drunk of it (Mk 14:23). There are a few ancient Oriental liturgies, which do not have the formula of consecration. The words of institution are simply missing. The early local communities where such liturgies originated do not seem to have attached to the mechanical repetition of the words of institution the importance we attach to them now. Other Oriental liturgies do have the words of institution, but in addition to these words they include also a consecratory epiclesis or invocation to the Father to send down the Holy Spirit and transform the elements.

More importantly, for the first nine centuries, and apart from very few exceptions, the Church does not seem to have bothered about the—exact 'moment of consecration.' She knew — and taught her faithful accordingly — that the Lord begins to be sacramentally present in the course of the Eucharistic Prayer, which is obviously the climax of the celebration, but she does not seem to have made any discernible attempt to pinpoint the exact moment when the real presence starts.

It is only in the ninth century that theologians, departing from the previous tradition, began to attach an exaggerated importance to the moment of consecration. A couple of centuries later the Church was confronted with the first serious Eucharistic heresy, namely, that of Berengarius, who denied the doctrine of the Eucharistic change and probably also the real presence. As an understandable reaction against such a serious dogmatic error, not only did the Church reassert forcefully the central belief in the real presence, but also went beyond that and officially acknowledged that Christ's real presence begins precisely at the consecration, in virtue of the words of institution. And so as to drive the point home more forcefully, she began to raise the host and the chalice immediately after the consecration, as an invitation to the faithful to adore the Eucharistic Lord, already present on the altar. In the first millennium the consecrated elements were raised at the end of the entire Eucharistic Prayer, not before.

The World Council of Churches has recently stated: "In the early liturgies the whole 'prayer action' was thought of as bringing about the reality promised by Christ. The invocation of the Spirit was made both on the community and on the elements of bread and wine. Recovery of such an understanding may help us overcome our difficulties concerning a special moment of consecration".

The Eucharistic Change

"What looks like bread is not bread"

Every Catholic knows that in the Eucharist, appearances are deceptive, that sensory experience conveys a message, which is directly contradicted by faith. In this particular domain our experience is certainly not reliable, for to all external appearances, even after the consecration bread continues to be bread, when in reality it has ceased to be plain bread in order to become the body of the glorified Lord. Every catechism kid knows that a consecrated host looks and tastes like bread, but in reality it is Jesus, not bread. St Cyril of Jerusalem expressed this with transparent clarity in his famous catechetical sermons:

Therefore do not look at them (the eucharistic elements) as mere bread and wine, for they are the body and blood of Christ . . . Even if the senses tell you that, your faith should make you firm and certain; do not judge it by your taste . . . what looks like bread is not bread, even if it tastes like it, but rather the body of Christ" (Catecheses 22:26).

And Milan is not different from Jerusalem. There it is St Ambrose who conveys the very same message as Cyril, for this conception is common to East and West:

Perhaps you will say: I see something else, how do you tell me that I am seeing the body of Christ . . . Let us show that this is not what nature has made but what the blessing has consecrated, for the power of the blessing is greater than that of nature; for through that blessing nature itself is changed . . . The Lord himself says, "This is my body." Before the blessing of the heavenly word, it is the material species, but after the consecration, the body is signified. (De Mysteriis 8)

The central idea is crystal clear. The terms used by these early Christian writers may differ, but their fundamental conception is uniform. In the course of the Eucharistic liturgy a change, a transformation or transmutation of the elements takes place, perceptible only through the eyes of faith: instead of the previous materiality of bread and wine, we have now present on the altar, the very person of the glorified Christ. Expressed in traditional terminology, the Eucharistic change or transubstantiation means that the substance of bread is changed into the substance of the glorified Christ. But modern attempts to express this very difficult doctrine in ways other than the traditional, should be considered seriously: "They try to present this dogma in existential categories which are at once ontologically profound and more intelligible to the people of our day". (Schillebeeckx)

A disturbing, parallelism: the Incarnation and the Eucharist

The above explanation undoubtedly constitutes an ancient, respectable tradition that has prevailed for centuries in the Catholic Church. However, it is not the only one. Alongside this popular trend that stresses the transformation of the eucharistic elements into Christ, the change of bread and wine into his living person, there is another, equally venerable and even older tradition which speaks of the presence of Christ along with bread and wine. According to this way of conceiving things, bread does not vanish, it remains, but it is subsumed by the glorified Christ.

This second trend appeals to the Incarnation as to its pattern. For there is a strict parallelism between the Incarnation and the Eucharist: the Word of God (the Son) performs in the Eucharist a function similar to that performed by him at the Incarnation. Then he assumed human flesh and now he assumes human bread. At the time of the Incarnation the Son appeared in human form; now he appears in sacramental form. The Eucharistic altar becomes a replica of Mary's womb. Bread and wine are now appropriated by the Son and made into a vehicle of his salvific Eucharistic presence.

St Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, France, puts it with a clarity that almost borders on crudity:

"For just as the bread that proceeds from the earth after having received the prayer of invocation, is no longer ordinary bread, but the Eucharist, made up of two elements, earthly and heavenly, so also our bodies, by receiving the Eucharist are no longer corruptible...".

So also St Justin:

"Just as through the word of God our Saviour Jesus Christ became man for the sake of our salvation assumed our flesh and blood; so also the food over which the prayer of his word has been said . . . is (becomes) the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus, as we are taught".

Vatican II has pointed out (UR 11) that within Catholic doctrine there is a hierarchy of truths, namely that not all Catholic dogmas can be reckoned as of equal importance. Consequently the absolutely central dogma of the RP should be carefully distinguished from the ancillary doctrine of the Eucharistic conversion. One should also distinguish the theological content of a dogma from its literary garb or terminological expression. Rejection of a particular terminology as unsuitable to modern times does not mean rejection of the doctrinal content expressed through it.

Historical Development of the Doctrine

The words of the institution certainly contain the nucleus of every aspect of the Eucharistic doctrine. Authors generally try to show the doctrine of transubstantiation from the Last Supper, either by a mere analysis of the words or at least by adding the subsequent interpretation of the Church. It is also said that this dogma of the Eucharistic change is only an explication of the elements contained in the institution (Rahner). But it would be better to acknowledge in all sincerity that "it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainly about everything that has been revealed" (DV 2). The figurative sense of Christ's words cannot be excluded on merely exegetical grounds (Dupont, Benoit, Boismard). The doctrine of the Eucharistic change goes back to the Supper. But, to see the full Tridentine teaching clearly contained in those texts, is an exaggeration. This is implicitly acknowledged by Trent itself, when it declares that the words of institution must be taken in that meaning "in which they were understood by the Fathers" (CF 1514).

The Controversy in the XI century

Aristotelian categories displace patristic conceptions. The broad ecclesial perspectives in which the Fathers situated the Eucharist are lost in favour of a narrow concentration on the RP. Berengarius (1005-1088), head of the school of St. Martin of

Tours, was the first to deny the change of substance. He denies the Eucharistic conversion and probably also the RP, proposing instead a merely a spiritual or symbolic presence of Christ in the Eucharist as being more reasonable. He seemed to reduce the Eucharistic presence to a dynamic presence of Christ, sign of our spiritual union with him. He tries to defend his position by constant reference to St. Augustine, and to prove from reason the impossibility of eucharistic conversion, on the ground that Christ's body is now glorified and therefore incorruptible. The Church reacts sharply against the Berengarian errors and defends both the RP and the reality of the Eucharistic change. Under Gregory VII, in 1079, Berengarius is forced to subscribe to the orthodox formula (CF 1501). This is the first document of the Church speaks of 'substantial change'. As for the exact term 'transubstantiation', it appeared around 1150 and is soon accepted by the Magisterium. The councils of Lateran IV (1215, CF 21) and Lyons II (1274, CF 28) make use of the very same expression, three centuries before Trent.

Council of Trent: Session 13 (1551)

Historical setting: Luther

Luther is as staunch a defender of the Real Presence, as he is an opponent of transubstantiation. He holds the simultaneous coexistence of both, Christ's body and the material substance of bread. His main reason is scriptural: for Paul, even after the liturgical blessing of the elements, still calls it bread (1 Cor 10,16; 11,28). Therefore the reality of bread remains. He adds a theological argument based on the Incarnation: "It is not necessary for the human nature to be transubstantiated and the divine nature to be contained under the accidents of human nature". The same Christological principle applies to the Eucharist. He also sees the doctrine clothed in scholastic garb and rejects it outright.

Moreover the Church kept the true faith for more than twelve hundred years, during which time the holy Fathers never, at any time or place, mentioned this transubstantiation, until the pseudo philosophy of Aristotle began to make its inroads into the Church in these last three hundred years (*Werke* 6,509).

Calvin

His reaction is equally articulate: "The second error which the devil has sown to corrupt this holy mystery is that...once the words of consecration have been pronounced, the bread is transubstantiated into the body of Christ and the wine into his blood. This lie has, first of all, no foundation whatsoever in Scripture and not a single witness in the early Church. I abstain from innumerable testimonies of Scripture and the Fathers, where the sacrament is called bread. I would only say that the nature of the sacrament requires this: that the material bread remains as a visible sign of the body" (Treatise on the Supper V, 450). Therefore, his main arguments to reject the change are: i) lack of scriptural evidence; ii) empirical experience: after the consecration the senses still testify to the permanence of bread; iii) the nature of the sacrament requires that the bread should remain.

The Conciliar Doctrine

The council of Trent had to pronounce clearly the doctrine of the Eucharist in the face of the violent attacks from the part of the Reformers. But the council did not mean to propose a complete doctrine but to affirm clearly the important points, which were being denied. The discussion on the Eucharist began as early as 1547, though the

decree on the Eucharistic presence could be published only by the council's 13th session in 1551. the decree contains 8 chapters and 11 canons. It deals with the following points.

1. The fact and the meaning of the presence of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist, based on the scriptural evidence. This is not directed against Luther who never denied the 'real presence', but against Zwingli who opposed Luther on this point. According to Zwingli, Christ is present in the Eucharist 'in sign' only. Also opposed to the Church's doctrine was the theory of Christ's dynamic presence 'by his power' as proposed by Calvin (CF 1513-15, 1526).

2. The presence of Christ is complete under each species. This point already affirmed in previous documents against the forerunners of the Reformation (CF 1506, 1507/17) is further elaborated because of the new denials (CF 1516).

3. Though it is ordained to sacramental communion, the Eucharistic presence exists prior to it and continues in the sacred species, which have not been consumed. Luther himself was hesitant on this point. Melancthon clearly denied it (1516, 1529).

4. The Eucharistic presence is effected by transubstantiation. Following Wyclif (1507/16), Luther thought that bread and wine subsist together with Christ's body and blood. Against this, the council affirms a complete change of substance with the result that of the bread and wine only the outward appearances remain. It declares appropriate the term 'transubstantiation' which since the 4th Lateran council (CF 1505) was officially used to express this change of substance (1519, 1527).

5. From this exposition of doctrine, the council derives concrete conclusions as regards mostly the reception and the use of the sacrament (1521-24, 1532-36) and the cult of the Eucharist (1520, 1531).

The mind of the Council on the question is still the object of controversy. The following can be held as highly probable.

1. The Council proposes the doctrine of the Eucharistic change in Aristotelian terminology, since the theological framework of the time is clearly scholastic and ultimately Aristotelian. The content of the teaching on transubstantiation is theological, but its external clothing is Aristotelian, and therefore time bound and historically conditioned.
2. Relative importance of the doctrine. One should always keep in mind that according to Vatican II "among the truths of Catholic doctrine there exists a hierarchy, since not all these truths are equally connected with the fundamental Christian faith" (UR 11). The second canon on transubstantiation is added by the Council as a defensive measure in order to protect the fundamental truth of the RP. Hence, there are three elements to be clearly distinguished in the conciliar doctrine: a) the central fact of the RP (primary truth); b) The Eucharistic change of bread into the body of Christ (secondary truth); c) the question of terminology.
3. Dogma of Faith? Most authors assume that after Trent, the doctrine of transubstantiation is an unchangeable dogma of faith. But, there is no scriptural warrant, either direct or indirect, for the Tridentine

doctrine of transubstantiation. A clear and direct teaching of the council does not make it ipso facto an irreformable dogma of faith, for much of the Conciliar teaching is but the reflection of the theology of the times.

Theological Reflection

1. How to combine sacramentality and substantiality is the precise problem in every theology of the Eucharistic presence. From the early centuries this problem, approached from two opposite directions, gave rise to two different explanations. Characterized as symbolism and metabolism; each completes rather than contradicts the other. The Council of Trent recognizes that a tension exists between sacramentality and substantiality. The "natural mode of existing" of the glorified Christ is distinguished from his "sacramental presence to us in his own substance". Substantial, yet not natural, but sacramental: such is the mysterious modality of Christ's Eucharistic presence.

2. Already from the time of the Fathers of the Church Eucharistic conversion was a theological issue. The Council of Trent spoke of the "change of the whole substance", expressing the faith of the Church. This reality is the body of Christ: such is the truth implied in the "change of the whole substance. It is a "change of being", or in the term of the Greek Fathers, a "change of element". A deep realism is involved here: the change which takes place here is ontological and intrinsic, not superficial or extrinsic. At the same time, the reality of Christ's body is present sacramentally, not naturally: Transubstantiation is profoundly real but it is so within the framework of the category of '*sacramentum-signum*'.

3. Clearly the change does not take place on the phenomenal plane subjective to sensitive experience. Not only do the "appearance of bread and wine remain, but their chemical composition and physical reality also continue. This means that the theology of transubstantiation is independent of any scientific theory of matter. The change in transubstantiation is ontological and metaphysical. So, in transubstantiation, ontology, not cosmology is involved. That the "material reality" or the "physical elements" remain unchanged must be admitted squarely; the change that takes place is not located on the plane of physical appearances, but on that of being. To place the substantial conversion of the Eucharistic elements at the level of their chemical composition is to lose sight of the sacramental modality of Christ's presence. It is also to bypass its religious significance in the sacramental order.

4. St. Thomas bases the ontological change implied in the Eucharistic conversion on the metaphysical distinction of 'substance' and 'accidents'. Of bread and wine there remain the accidents; indeed, these must remain, for they play an essential function in containing the substance of Christ's body and blood. The substance however, is changed. The change of substance is complete and entire. It is not a mere 'transformation' (referring to 'form' as distinct from 'matter'). Thus the substance of Christ's body and blood is contained in the accidents of bread and wine. It is not contained locally, as is a material substance within the limits of its connatural spatial dimensions, but substantially, as substance in its accidents.

5. This ontological change of substance accounts for the distinctive features of Christ's Eucharistic presence. That Christ's body and blood are present so long as the appearance of bread and wine remain is due to the fact that the accidents of the latter

continue, still maintaining the presence of the substance of the former. Similarly in each particle of the consecrated bread, the entire body of the glorified Christ is present, for its presence is not local but substantial. In the mind of St. Thomas however, the metaphysical change of substance is primarily designed to make the sacramentality of Christ's substantial presence intelligible. Present substantially where the sacred species are found, Christ is not contained in them locally. They are subject to movement and change; he is not. In particular, Christ's glorified body is not brought down from heaven by the words of consecration; rather, the consecrated species are drawn up to it and become identified with it sacramentally. The effect of consecration is much less making Christ descend upon the altar, as is often said, than making our human offerings rise up to God, making them join the glorious, celestial Christ standing at the Father's right hand .

6. This means that the species of bread and wine acquire, by the act of consecration, a new relation to Christ's glorified humanity, by virtue of which, ceasing to sustain their connatural substance, they begin to contain that of Christ. This "relation of containing" must be correctly understood: it belongs to the order of objective reality, and makes Christ's substance really and actually - though sacramentally - present in the consecrated species. The consecrated species are not related to the heavenly Christ extrinsically, the "relation of containing" implied in the transubstantiation of bread and wine changes their substance into Christ's own.

7. The merit of St. Thomas' view on transubstantiation is that it makes provision for a clearer distinction between physical composition and ontological reality. The theology of Christ's Eucharistic presence, however mysterious it may remain, is thereby freed from false problems. In particular, the "eucharistic miracles" seem to pertain more to pious imagination than to actual fact. Whatever the explanation of the facts might be, according to St. Thomas' principles, one thing is certain: what appeared on those occasions, could not be the real flesh and blood of Christ, for such a possibility was excluded by the nature of transubstantiation and of Christ's sacramental presence. Transubstantiation belongs by nature to a level of reality deeper than the empirical. The level of reality at which transubstantiation takes place remains obscure and mysterious.

Transignification, Transfinalization?

1. The validity of the metaphysics of 'substance-accidents' and its relevance to the mentality of modern man have been questioned in recent years. On the other hand, personalism is concerned with meaning; the question, which it raises where the reality of things is concerned, is that of the meaning they have for men. In this context, the point at issue concerning the "substance" of bread and wine is no longer whether, according to a "metaphysics of nature" they can or cannot be considered as physical units. Rather it is: what meaning have bread and wine for man? Their deep human significance is their reality. Bread and wine are anthropological realities. Having no intelligibility apart from man, they cannot be defined without reference to him. The substance of bread does not refer exclusively to the particular underlying atoms and molecules but includes the immaterial elements of meaning and purpose without which this stuff could not be bread. "Breadness" therefore includes meaning and purpose, and if the significance and finality are changed, then the being is changed and the stuff becomes something else. More clearly: to say what bread is, materially considered, is not to define it adequately; for the unity and intelligibility it

possesses is a unity and intelligibility inseparable from its relation to man. The human sphere of reference is the formal element of the definition of bread. The physical composition of bread, materially considered, is obtainable in different manners: whether it can be called and is bread depends finally on whether or not; the context gives it the anthropological significance implied in bread as food for men.

2. In this context, the question of the Eucharistic transubstantiation of bread and wine becomes one of meaning and purpose. The material components remain, but receive a new intelligibility in relation to man, a new sphere of reference and pattern of unity. Therefore, a new sacramental reality has come into being: this is the sacramental body and blood of Christ. Of this process of change, a double formulation is possible. Transignification means that a change of meaning for man has taken place, by virtue of which the still enduring physical components have become a new reality. Transfinalization designates a change in purpose due to a divine ordination: the physical reality has been withdrawn from its natural function in order to become exclusively the sacrament of the presence and self-giving of Christ. As a result of this change, the meaning and purpose without which bread cannot be bread are no longer there. The new meaning and purpose brought about a substantial change (transubstantiation), a change in being, that it is no longer bread. The 'breadness' has gone and there has been a change in the ontological reality, not just in extrinsic designation. A new function, affecting the order of reality, such is the objective change implied by the Eucharistic transubstantiation. The "sacramental meaning, which Christ gave to bread and wine" constitutes their new and decisive reality.

3. Thus the contention is made that Transignification and Transfinalization can advantageously be substituted for transubstantiation as valid expressions of the faith in a "change of the whole substance" of bread and wine. In the light of the recent interpretations, it seems clear that the Council of Trent does not rule out such a hypothesis. In the mind of the Council, 'transubstantiation* is but an appropriate appellation for the change of the whole substance", which affects the Eucharistic elements; the latter expression is designed to mean no more than a complete change of reality. The question under consideration, however, is precisely whether the new concepts are, or are not, adequate enunciations of a complete change of reality. Are these concepts adequate enunciations by themselves, to the effect that transubstantiation, supposedly less suited to modern thinking, can be dispensed with? Or, on the contrary, do they only supplement and complete the meaning conveyed by the traditional concept?

4. In this difficult question, much depends on what is understood by meaning and signification, by purpose and finalization. It is clear that no new meaning or purpose added extrinsically to the otherwise continuing reality of the Eucharistic elements can account for their real identity with the body and blood of Christ. For, new meaning and religious interpretation, new purpose and destination are added extrinsically to the elements used in other sacramental actions, without however, changing their reality. These elements are assumed precisely as they stand and for what they are as efficacious signs of Christ's power; they are not changed into him. Christ is present in them dynamically, not "substantially". Only such signification and finalization as would intrinsically affect the elements so as to change their reality can claim to enunciate their real sacramental identity with Christ's body and blood.

5. Transignification and Transfinalization remain therefore ambiguous terms. If they can be understood in such a way as to imply a true change of reality through a change of meaning, this is not their only possible or immediate meaning. Hence the position of Pope Paul VI in the Encyclical letter *Mysterium Fidei*:

...we must listen with docility to the voice of the teaching and praying Church. This voice, which constantly echoes the voice of Christ, assures us that the way Christ is made present in this Sacrament is none other than by the change of the whole substance of the bread into His Body, and of the whole substance of the wine into His Blood, and that this unique and truly wonderful change the Catholic Church rightly calls transubstantiation.⁽⁵¹⁾ As a result of transubstantiation, the species of bread and wine undoubtedly take on a new meaning and a new finality, for they no longer remain ordinary bread and ordinary wine, but become the sign of something sacred, the sign of a spiritual food. However, the reason they take on this new significance and this new finality is simply because they contain a new "reality" which we may justly term ontological. Not that there lies under those species what was already there before, but something quite different; and that not only because of the faith of the Church, but in objective reality, since after the change of the substance or nature of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, nothing remains of the bread and wine but the appearances, under which Christ, whole and entire, in His physical "reality" is bodily present, although not in the same way that bodies are present in a given place. N 46

6. This text makes it clear that the Eucharistic transubstantiation must be kept in mind while speaking of Transignification and Transfinalization. There are differing opinions concerning whether Transignification and Transfinalization must be combined to understand the Eucharistic presence, or whether they are in themselves adequate enunciations of the Eucharistic change. Even though inadequate in themselves to express the full significance of the Eucharistic presence, Transignification and Transfinalization do stress what is in fact one of its essential features, its dynamism and functionality. This is not meant to exclude its substantial character, but to stress the fact that, being never an end in itself, it is always related to the sacrificial meal of the Eucharistic celebration. The Eucharistic presence is necessarily realized within the re-presentation of Christ's sacrifice; it is by nature ordained to the sacred meal. Even though made present before the sacred meal, and eventually remaining present after. Christ in the Eucharist is always present '*ut sumatur*'. This essential fact serves as a fundamental principle for a theology of the "permanent sacrament" and qualifies the meaning of the Eucharistic reservation, of "visits" and "eucharistic devotions".

7. Christ's presence in the tabernacle is always a presence between two celebrations; better still: it prolongs one celebration and keeps its essential relation to it, remaining capable of imparting a sacramental share in it through "sacramental communion". This essential orientation of the Eucharistic presence to sacramental consumption is indicative of the correct scale of values in the Eucharistic practices. Adoration of the "real presence" is not the central meaning: "the Eucharist is not preserved in order to be adored, rather because it is preserved, it must be adored". It is preserved, however, so that union with the sacrificial meal of the Eucharistic celebration may be prolonged. Through the prolonged Eucharistic presence of Christ, the Church's union with the paschal mystery, established in the celebration is continued. Christ remains present as a token of the covenantal relationship of the Church with God, which has become actualised in the celebration. The Eucharistic reservation is the efficacious sign of the "new and eternal covenant", once for all

established by God with the Church in Christ. The sacramental presence of Christ in the Eucharist is the permanent symbol in the era of the Church of God's decisive covenantal action accomplished in Christ.

8. The new theories have won over some theologians of repute. On the whole they make the presentation of the mystery more appealing and acceptable to the modern mind. It is a dynamic, personalist presentation of a mysterious reality, a traditional doctrine clothed in a modern garb. The main objection against this presentation is this. The substance cannot be reduced to the sum total of inter-personal relationships. The change cannot be reduced to a mere change of meaning, for it should rather affect the ontological structure of bread, which is deeper than its meaning and significance. Are not the three divine persons ontologically constituted by relations?

9. Different authors explain the relation between transubstantiation and Transignification differently. The ontological change implied is either identified with Transignification (Schoonenberg), or is considered to be the result of Transignification (Davis, Semmelroth), or is viewed as the cause of Transignification (Paul VI, Schillebeeckx).

10. In the eating of Christ's body and the drinking of his blood, the Eucharistic presence attains its end and exercises its function. Does the presence however continue under the species even after consumption? Traditionally the answer to the question is positive. Christ, it is argued, remains present - even after the consumption of the sacred species - as long as the "physical reality" of bread and wine remains. The exact length of time is doubtful and depends on concrete circumstances. The question must however be asked whether this view does not make the sacramental presence depend on the "physical reality" of the species more than is warranted.

11. In this context, Karl Rahner proposed a view in the light of the renewed understanding of sacramental theology. Bread and wine are anthropological realities; that is to say: they are what they are with reference to men as food and drink; they are defined by their meaning. However, as food already eaten, even though the "physical reality" and the chemical composition may continue, it is no longer true to say that it keeps its anthropological meaning as food directed to eating. That the real presence of the body and blood of Christ lasts as long as the sacramental sign of the Eucharistic species exists is a principle agreed upon by theologians. This does not however seem to imply that the presence lasts after the sacramental consumption. For, with the consumption, bread ceases to be as a human reality and therefore as a sacramental sign for man. Bread, once eaten, is not a human reality, whose meaning is that of food. If the sacramental sign, however, vanishes with the consumption of the sacrament, so too does the sacramental presence of Christ. Where the sign-value has vanished, as is the case of the lost particles, the sacramental presence has ceased. The *ex opere operato* efficacy of the Eucharistic meal seems attached to the actual eating of Christ's body and drinking of his blood; all that follows after belongs to the personal commitment of the *opus operantis*. Significantly, '*Eucharisticum Mystrium*' upholds the practice of thanksgiving after communion, but omits any reference to the traditional opinion. However, the practice of thanksgiving after communion remains meaningful, but its motivation should be changed: the reason for this practice cannot be sought in the supposed permanence of the RP in the communicant for 10-15 minutes. The real reason is that we need a period of silent prayer to deepen, interiorise

and appropriate personally the public Thanksgiving (Eucharist), which has just been celebrated. "Those who have received Holy Communion should be encouraged to remain for a while in prayer" (*Eucharisticum Mysterium* n.38).

7. Logically it follows that thanksgiving after Mass is an act of personal realization, a prolongation of the inner attitude and disposition, which has been actualised in the Mass. After the liturgical celebration of the Eucharistic mystery, there remains room for prolonging personally one's union with Christ's sacrifice and need for responding personally to the grace of Christ's sacred banquet. On the other hand, that the whole celebration is in itself a "thanksgiving" (Eucharist) does not make "thanksgiving after Mass" purposeless. For, the Church's liturgical Eucharist calls for personal thanksgiving. That both liturgical celebration and personal assimilation are named by the same term (Eucharist # thanksgiving) indicates that personal prayer preserves the fundamental tone of praise (*berakah*) characteristic of the liturgical celebration, which it prolongs. In the last analysis, thanksgiving belongs to the subjective side of the sacramental event. It is the completion of one's personal response to the sacramental saving word of God in the liturgical celebration.

THE EUCHARISTIC BANQUET

Introduction

The Eucharistic celebration is a sacred meal; hence the name: "the Lord's Supper". Of the two complementary aspects of the memorial, sacrifice and banquet, the meal aspect was the more explicit in the consciousness of the apostolic and post-apostolic Church; the sacrificial aspect was presupposed here. Since then a one-sided emphasis of the sacrificial aspect loomed large in Eucharistic theology. Now a new emphasis has come to the meal aspect and hence there remains to explain the exact function of the sacred meal as well as its theological significance in the sacramental representation of the mystery of Christ. Hence in Section I we will look into the theology of the sacrificial meal; Section II examines the effects of the sacramental participation in the Eucharistic meal in which the celebration culminates. We can propose the following enunciation: The Eucharistic sacrifice is consummated in a sacred banquet in which Christ is received as sacrificial victim. As the sacrament of the Church's unity and of the Church's union with God in Christ, the Eucharistic meal builds up the ecclesial community and orientates it to the heavenly banquet of eternal salvation.

Section I: Theology of the Sacrificial Meal

1. The meal of the Eucharistic celebration brings to completion the commensality of all communion sacrifices. The sacred meal means more than God's acceptance of man's sacrificial offering; it is on the part of God a gift in response to

man's calling, a personal communication of life. The originality of the Eucharistic banquet consists in the fact that in it, the Church receives Christ's body and blood. Communion is not only the act of eating Christ's body; it is specifically the consumption of the sacrificial victim. It is communion with the very victim of the sacrifice. It is not only Christ but also emphatically a self-offering Christ, a Christ-victim that is consumed. In this sense the communicant is incorporated and carried over, as it were, by this victimal action of the Eucharistic Christ to the presence of the Father. "In the Mass, therefore, the sacrifice and the sacred meal belong to the same mystery, so much so that they are linked by the closest bond . . . Participation in the Lord's Supper is always communion with Christ offering himself for us as a sacrifice to the Father" (*Eucharisticum Mysterium*, n. 36).

2. Nor is communion to be dissociated from the memorial aspect of the Eucharistic mystery. The past salvific event of Christ's paschal mystery is rendered symbolically present in the memorial precisely through edible elements, and this is rather peculiar. For the notion of memorial does not, by itself, demand an edible form. The past event can be commemorated through other means and other symbols, which have nothing to do with eating and drinking. In fact, there were many other types of memorials in Israel's religious history, but the Eucharist is a very special memorial, which is directed towards the climax of communion. This memorial implies the objective, symbolic presence of a past salvific event, but also the real presence of Christ himself, and this with a view to communion. It is certainly a peculiar memorial.

3. Unfortunately a full grasp of all the extraordinary riches contained in Eucharistic communion seems to be rather rare. Most people seem to be entirely satisfied with the thought that Jesus has become present in them. Comparatively few are aware of the fact that, in its full and comprehensive reality, eucharistic communion, coming as it does at the end of the celebration, is a profoundly Trinitarian act which is in no way restricted to a sort of private interview between the communicant and the eucharistic Christ. It is that, no doubt, but it is much more than that. For the victim of the memorial sacrifice is a glorified victim accepted by the Father, filled with the Holy Spirit and sent with this fullness to the communicant. Eucharistic communion is a deeply Trinitarian action.

4. And in this action it is the Christian's bodily dimension that stands out prominently. Communion is in reality a mystery of two bodies: the glorified, edible body of Christ and the unglorified body of the communicant. Eucharistic communion is a constant reminder to the Church that she too, will be glorified one day in soul and body. Communion is like a reiterated guarantee, a restated pledge of her final glory. Through Eucharistic communion she is gradually drawn into the mystery of her own bodily resurrection. The body that receives the Lord's Eucharistic body is destined to be raised, is destined to live forever.

5. The extraordinary importance the New Testament attaches to the aspect of communion within the Eucharistic celebration is already evident from the fact that absolutely all the Eucharistic passages mention prominently (and some of them almost exclusively) the meal aspect. This clearly shows that, in keeping with the institution itself, the apostolic Church apparently could not conceive a eucharistic celebration deprived of communion, for it is almost a contradiction in terms to take part in an act of worship which is essentially a banquet, without sharing in the victim. It was only a few centuries after the close of the New Testament period that the

custom began — lamentably — of being present at the Eucharistic action without receiving communion. In the earlier period Mass without communion was simply inconceivable.

6. This biblical insistence on the aspect of communion is but the echo of the Old Testament. The two sacrifices that constitute the immediate background to the Last Supper, namely, the Covenant and Passover sacrifices were both climaxed by the consumption of the sacrificial victim. After the highly symbolic ceremony of blood sprinkling which sealed the Sinaitic covenant, Moses and the seventy elders "beheld God and ate and drank" (Ex 24:11). Similarly, the last solemn act that brought to a close the Jewish Passover celebrations in Jerusalem was the common sharing of all the participants in the sacrificial lamb slain in the Temple.

7. The Eucharistic celebration is the efficacious sign of a "sacred exchange" between God and the Church. The liturgical unfolding of the mystery demonstrates this sacred exchange: the offertory rite initiates a first movement, in which through Christ, the Church is lifted up to God; the communion rite brings to completion the reversed movement in which God communicates with the Church through Christ. Both movements, upward and downward merge in the Eucharistic prayer and evolve around the anamnesis. In the sacred exchange that marks the double movement of the mystery, the Eucharistic banquet represents the moment of communication from God to the Church. Through Christ, the victim of sacrifice given as food in the sacramental sign of bread and wine, God demonstrates most effectively his will to share with men his own life and to commune with them personally. This invitation is addressed to the Church.

8. The liturgical practice of the "altar facing the people" symbolizes the meal-aspect of the Eucharistic mystery. In the early centuries, the disposition of the altar was that the celebrating priest should be facing the east, thus being turned towards the rising sun, the symbol of Christ. The symbolism of the priest facing the people, whom he invites fraternally to partake of the sacred meal, must not be taken as exclusive. The reversed posture of the priest is also meaningful; it shows him leading the people to God in an act of sacrifice. The Christian altar, central place of worship, is at once an altar of sacrifice and a table laid for meal. Moreover, the altar symbolizes Christ himself, as the OT altar symbolized Yahweh.

The Glorified Eucharistic Body

In order to understand all the doctrinal and spiritual fullness implied in eucharistic communion a brief consideration of the nature of the glorified body according to St Paul will prove useful.

Nowhere does Paul give us a description of Christ's Eucharistic body, but he describes the qualities of our future resurrection body in a passage that in all likelihood is but an echo of his memorable Damascus experience. On that occasion Paul encountered the glorified Jesus and apparently that experience made such a deep impression on him that years later, writing to the Corinthians on the theme of our resurrection, he applies to man's resurrected body what he himself had contemplated in the glorified Jesus at the moment of his conversion. According to Paul the future

body of the Christian is patterned on the risen body of Christ, "who will transfigure our lowly body to be like his own glorious body" (Phil 3,21). Jesus is the pattern; we shall be the replicas of that pattern. The body of Christ as well as our own are or shall be "Spirit-filled" (1 Cor 15:43), rendered spiritual in the strongest possible sense of the word, as entirely possessed by the Holy Spirit. At his resurrection Christ was constituted a "life-giving spirit", namely, the source and fountainhead of the Holy Spirit, who through the glorified humanity of Christ flows down into the believer.

We can now put together synthetically several scattered references in Paul's writings, which bring out so very powerfully the role of the Spirit in Jesus as well as in man. Paul is certainly heir to a very rich tradition that, already in the Old Testament, consistently connects the Spirit with both power or strength and sanctity. The Spirit of God is not so much the Spirit of love (as we routinely say even in our official liturgy) but rather the Spirit of might, of power and strength, whether physical, moral or spiritual. Along with this quality, the Spirit of Yahweh is the Spirit that sanctifies men deeply, totally, by possessing them as he overshadowed and possessed Mary at the Annunciation. It is not for nothing that in Christian tradition he is always referred to as the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of sanctity.

And so these two characteristics, power and sanctity flow into the Spirit and through the Spirit into the risen Christ, rendered profoundly 'spiritual' at Easter. For Paul, the empty tomb on Easter Sunday is an astounding manifestation of "the strength of the might of the power of God, powerfully exercised" on the resurrected Christ. Not only is the resurrection of Jesus a marvellous display of his Father's power, but Christ's own body is explicitly called powerful, "raised in power" (1 Cor 15:43) — precisely because it is penetrated by the Spirit of power. In fact, at the resurrection Jesus becomes the Son-of-God-in-power (Rom 1:4), obviously not in the sense that he becomes the Son of God at the resurrection, but rather because the power of God, always present in him, begins to shine out, as it were, to radiate through his resurrected body.

Furthermore, it is not only divine power that is concentrated in his risen body; this body is also the shrine of God's own sanctity, present in him. For the Father has made Christ "our sanctification" (1 Cor 1:30). All the treasures of sanctity, which God has destined for men are now concentrated in Christ and it is through him as a most necessary channel of transmission that they are destined to flow into men. Power and sanctity, linked up already in the Spirit, possess now fully the resurrected body of Jesus, precisely because he is possessed by the Spirit.

It is this resurrected body of Christ, full of sanctifying power and replete with the Holy Spirit, that is received in Eucharistic communion. Paul does not say so explicitly, but he has certainly laid down the foundation of an immensely rich spiritual conception.

If Paul lays the foundation, John completes the picture. Jn 6:57 is an extraordinarily suggestive text which correctly translated should read: "As I, who am sent by the living Father, myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me." John is here presenting Jesus as the intermediary of divine life, and his Father as the source of his life. In John's gospel divine life is that reality which is so very suggestive and rich, and at the same time so very elusive, so difficult to grasp and define accurately. Jesus occupies here a middle position between his Father and the Christian communicant. Just as on Tabor he was the mediator of light, so at

the Eucharistic communion he is the mediator of life. At his transfiguration the effulgence of the Father, "who lives in inaccessible light" (1 Tim 6:16), shone through him. So now, in communion, divine life, like a mighty torrent, wells up in the Father, flows down into the risen Eucharistic Christ and from him to the communicant. As a consequence of Eucharistic communion the Christian is flooded with divine life, the life that comes to him through the resurrected Jesus, but which is not Jesus' own, for before imparting it to men he receives it from his Father. The risen Eucharistic Christ is a receiver before being a giver; the life he imparts in the Eucharist is not his own, it is his Father's.

At communion we drink this Trinitarian life in plentiful draughts. Jesus had announced it earlier: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink" (Jn 7,37). The Christian accepts this invitation at the moment of communion, when he drinks in life from the glorified Christ. And —going now slightly beyond the Johannine conception— this life is ultimately identified with the person of the Holy Spirit, that "river of life (which) rising from the throne of God (the Father) and of the Lamb (the risen Christ) flows down crystal-clear" (Apoc 22:1). It is by heeding Jesus' invitation to come and drink from him that the communicant is "made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor 12:13). Eucharistic communion is the moment when the sanctifying power of God, crystallized in the Spirit and filling to the brim the glorified, Eucharistic body of Christ, takes possession of the communicant. As a consequence of communion, the Christian drinks in Christ's own life, which is in reality the very life of his Father. Eucharistic communion, therefore, implies a progressive flooding of the Christian with the very life of God. It is a truly Trinitarian encounter at which the sanctifying life of the Father, personalized in the Spirit and present in the Risen Jesus, flows down to and entirely soaks the communicant.

The Vivifying Eucharist And The Holy Spirit

It cannot be denied that the early Oriental writers have a charm of expression that is matched only by the depth of their doctrine. The Eucharist attracted them powerfully and it is especially the effects of Eucharistic communion that they often expounded to their faithful, either in sermons or in catechetical instructions. Unlike at the present time, there were no war clouds hovering over the Middle East in those early centuries. Both Egypt and Syria could boast of prestigious Christian writers especially in their two great intellectual centres, Alexandria and Antioch.

The influence of the Johannine School of theology was certainly strong in Alexandria. We have seen above that, as regards Eucharistic doctrine, John delights especially in expounding the vivifying effects of Christ's Eucharistic flesh, and it is precisely this aspect that is carried over and deepened by St Cyril, bishop of Alexandria. The Eucharist sinks its deepest roots in the mystery of the Incarnation, for the incarnate flesh of Christ is one and the same with his Eucharistic flesh. Just as it was for John, for Cyril too the Eucharist is primarily a mystery of life, in which the flesh of Christ is made vital and vitalizing for the faithful.

Cyril says:

"Just as if you join a piece of wax to another, you will see them both one in the other; in like manner, I think, he who receives the flesh of our Saviour and drinks his precious blood . . . will be found one with him, blended as it were and fused with him through that participation, so that Christ is found in him and he in Christ". The

intimate interpenetration and fusion between the Eucharistic Christ and the communicant brings down to the latter a fresh outpouring of life, a participation in the power and strength of Christ's resurrected flesh. According to Cyril,

It was fitting that (Christ) should be in us through the Holy Spirit... and that he should be mixed with our bodies through his holy flesh and his precious blood; and we have this in the form of bread and wine Lest we should be stunned by contemplating on the holy table of the churches his flesh and blood, God, accommodating himself to our weakness, instills into the offered gifts a vivifying strength and changes them into the power of his own body, so that we may have them as a life-giving participation and that we may have his own body in us like a vivifying seed.

Slightly different and even more beautiful is the Eucharistic conception of the two Antiochian doctors, St. John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia. Echoing a strong Oriental tradition, Chrysostom conceives, the Eucharistic blood as a carrier of the Holy Spirit, who pours himself into the communicant through the channel of the Eucharistic Christ. This is the ultimate and deepest reason for that aspect of vivification, so intimately connected with Christ's Eucharistic flesh. At that time all the faithful drank from the chalice much more liberally than they do today, and this explains some of Chrysostom's forceful expressions:

"When you see the Lord slain and immolated and the priest bent over the sacrifice and praying, and all the faithful turned crimson with that precious blood, do you think you are still on earth among men? Are you not rather transferred to heaven"? The same effect obviously applies to the person of the celebrating priest: "How much more pure than the rays of the sun should be the hand that cuts his flesh, the mouth that is filled with spiritual fire (= blood), the tongue reddened by this awesome blood?. What the angels . . . cannot contemplate without fear on account of the effulgence coming out of it, that is what we are fed on, what we mix ourselves with, we who have become one body and one flesh with Christ".

The Holy Spirit indwells this precious blood, it is the Spirit that renders it life giving: "In what order shall we place the priest who invokes the Holy Spirit? -Just think how pure and holy the soul should be that receives such a great Spirit." The same effect is expressed even more powerfully by Chrysostom's personal friend and fellow bishop, Theodore of Mopsuestia, in one of his popular catecheses: "(The sacramental bread) is enabled to impart to those who eat it, the happiness of immortality,...not by his own nature, but by the Spirit who dwells within it, as the body of Our Lord... received immortality by the power of the Spirit". He does not tire of coming back repeatedly to the same doctrine: "(Christ) placed before us the elements of bread and wine which are his body and blood, through which we eat the food of immortality and through which the grace of the Holy Spirit flows into us and feeds us into an immortal and incorruptible existence".

Far too many catechisms in the past — even in the recent past — have reduced the effects of Eucharistic communion to an impersonal increase in sanctifying grace. These early eastern writers spoke a very different language. Their stress, as seen in the two passages quoted above, is not on an impersonal 'grace' but rather — and emphatically — on the person of Christ, present in the communicant, and on the person of the Holy Spirit, present and active in the risen eucharistic Christ and through him also in the communicant. For them Eucharistic communion is a strictly personal encounter, based on faith, penetrated by love, soaked in life. In the document on the life of priests, Vatican II says, with a distinct Oriental ring: "Through this very

(eucharistic) flesh, made vital and vitalizing by the Holy Spirit, He offers life to men" (PO 5: Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*, p. 541). Similarly a few years later *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, of the Roman Congregation of Rites, stated: "On those who receive the body and blood of Christ the gift of the Holy Spirit is poured out abundantly, like living water (Jn 7:37-39), provided that his body and blood have been received sacramentally and spiritually, namely, by that faith that operates through charity" (n. 38).

Trinitarian Spirituality

It is rather unfortunate that for most Christians, even for those who delight in the daily reception of the Eucharistic Christ, communion means a very personal, warm, intimate encounter with Jesus—and nothing else. But what else is there besides that? Plenty more. The effulgence of the Lord of Easter, present within them, seems to have blinded them as it blinded Paul on the way to Damascus and made them incapable of perceiving the Trinitarian fullness that lies beneath this Christic encounter. Communion is surely the reception of the transfigured Christ, but it is also more, much more than that. It is a real banquet of eternal life we are presented with at each and every one of our Eucharistic communions.

a) A torrent of Trinitarian life.

It cannot be sufficiently emphasized that the person we receive at communion is not only Jesus, but emphatically the resurrected Jesus, the Lord of Easter, transfigured and glorified, resplendent with the glory of an eternal Tabor. And because he is glorified, he is necessarily overflowing with the Holy Spirit. Undoubtedly Jesus did have the Spirit dwelling in him prior to his resurrection, but it is only at Easter that the pure waters of the Spirit, which had accumulated within him, as it were, begin to flow out. The risen Christ becomes the fountainhead, the source of the Spirit, who is poured out on the believer in abundant measure. And it is specifically this resurrected Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit that we receive at communion. In fact, it is a twofold gift we receive: Christ and, inextricably linked with him, his Holy Spirit. The Spirit is poured out into the communicant through the transfigured Christ of Easter, present in the Eucharist. Prior to communion the believer was already in possession of the Spirit, dwelling within him, but now, as a consequence of communion, he receives a fresh outpouring of the same Spirit. The risen Eucharistic Christ becomes for him like a channel of transmission through which the pure waters of the Spirit flow into its inner recesses. The indwelling of the Spirit in the believer was already a marvellous reality quite independently of the Eucharist, but now, as a consequence of eucharistic communion, this indwelling presence of the Spirit grows in intensity, expands and develops like a seed full of life that bursts forth and sprouts heavenward. "We drink the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:13), Paul says in a probable Eucharistic reference. After drinking in long, plentiful draughts, the receiver should quietly relish the presence of the Spirit; he should let the Spirit, whom he has just received, act within him. "Let the Holy Spirit fill you" (Eph 1:18). The communicant should experience the gradually rising tide of the Spirit within his own person; he should be progressively filled up with the Spirit.

This presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharistic Christ is a dimension of the mystery, which was so very dear to the eastern branch of Christianity and which, due to a variety of reasons, grew increasingly dim in the West. For Orientals like St Basil, "communion in the Holy Spirit" is the only fruit of

the Eucharist, for all other aspects of the fruit have there their deepest root. In the Oriental anaphora (Eucharistic Prayer) of St Mark, we come across an incredibly forceful expression, which conveys succinctly the eastern conception of the Eucharist. In reference to the institution, this liturgy says: "Similarly after having supped, he took the cup . . . gave thanks, blessed . . . *filled it with the Holy Spirit* and distributed it." This is not an isolated case in the eastern liturgies, for St Ephrem says much the same thing: "He called the bread his living body, and he *filled it with himself and with the Holy Spirit*. ... This is my body: he who eats it in faith *eats with it the fire of the Holy Spirit*."

A retrospective glance at the reality of the paschal mystery will clarify further this profound dimension of the Eucharist. Already on Calvary the Holy Spirit was intimately associated with Jesus. In a way, the deepest aspect, the only fruit of Jesus' death and resurrection was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Redemption is completed when the Spirit is imparted. Jesus was the giver and the Spirit was the gift. And since the Eucharistic celebration is but the memorial of the paschal mystery, its perpetuation in symbolic sacramental form, it is obvious that the same outpouring of the Spirit should be actual and present now. The risen Christ imparted his sanctifying Spirit to the Church after he died and came back from the dead, and the same Jesus, eternally glorified now, continues to give out his Spirit in the Eucharist now. The outpouring of the Spirit was the first outcome of Christ's historical sacrifice, and now, in the Eucharist, the fresh outpouring of the Spirit through the Eucharistic Christ is also the final outcome of the memorial of that sacrifice. The glorified Jesus and his Spirit are one.

Yet the reality is deeper still. In a very real sense, the centre of the Eucharistic celebration is neither Jesus nor his Spirit, but rather the ultimate origin of them both: the Father. The three main dimensions of the Eucharist are the memorial, the sacrifice and the real presence that leads to communion, and in all three the Father plays a role of paramount importance. It is the Father who, under the aspect of memorial, is reminded of Jesus' death and resurrection. It is the Father who accepted Jesus' historical sacrifice on the cross and accepts now its sacramental representation on the altar. And it is the Father who imparts him to the worshipping congregation. Eucharistic communion is the reception of the glorified Christ filled with the Holy Spirit, but both of them, Christ and the Holy Spirit, are the gift of the Father to the Church. It is to the Father that practically all the liturgical prayers are directed. Even at the Eucharist, just as on the Cross, Christ is the mediator, not the end of the process.

At the beginning of the celebration the community gathered around the altar offered to the Father plain bread and wine in an ascending movement of self-commitment. Now, at the end of the same celebration and in a parallel but descending movement, the Father offers the community the very same gifts turned into his glorified Son filled with the Holy Spirit. The Father had accepted the sacrifice of the ecclesial community because it was the sacrifice of his Son, and now, as a further proof and testimony of his benevolent acceptance, as a sign that he was pleased with the offering, he returns the gift, marvellously transformed, back to the worshippers. This is the fullness of Eucharistic communion.

Communion, therefore, should not be looked upon only as a 'meeting with Jesus'. It is that certainly, but to reduce the profound reality, the enormous riches of Eucharistic communion to this personal meeting, no matter how warm and intimate, is

but a caricature of the truth. For in every communion God gives us much more than just a private interview with the person of Jesus. By means of this climax of the Eucharistic celebration, which is communion, the Father draws us further down into the inner sanctuary of his own Trinitarian family. It is not just Jesus we encounter, but the glorified Jesus full of the Spirit as the supreme gift of the Father.

b) The Eucharist and the Holy Spirit

“The pneumatic dimension of the Eucharistic mystery, so forcefully emphasized by the Oriental Tradition, is not only essential to an integral theology of the memorial of the Lord, but of primary importance” (Tillard).

1. The pneumatological dimension of the Eucharist

The Eucharist has for too long been considered as a Christological mystery. In reality its deepest core is Trinitarian rather than exclusively Christological. If the Eucharist, considered as memorial and sacrifice is oriented to the Father, its completion through communion brings out forcefully the all-important role played in it by the Holy Spirit. The Eucharistic mystery cannot be grasped in all its depth apart from this pneumatological dimension. Anamnesis and Epiclesis two essential aspects are not only intimately connected; they are almost identified in the person of the Risen Christ. For the glorified Jesus is like a perpetual memorial (anamnesis) or reminder before the Father, in an uninterrupted act of intercession for the needs of the Church that he may send upon the Church the life-giving Spirit. An essential element of the memorial or anamnesis is that of intercession. The very intercessory nature of the anamnesis opens up to and spontaneously flows into the epiclesis. The epiclesis is but the flowering of the anamnesis.

The fruit of Christ's historical sacrifice on the Cross was the plentiful outpouring of the Spirit. And since the Eucharistic mystery is but the objective memorial of that very sacrifice, the fruit has to be the same. The result of Christ's Paschal Mystery was the effusion of his Spirit. Similarly now, the sacramental result of the liturgical commemoration of the Paschal Mystery is a renewed outpouring of the same Spirit. What was then objectively granted is now subjectively appropriated. But in both the cases the gift is the same: the Holy Spirit of Christ.

2. The problem of the Epiclesis

The Eucharistic Epiclesis is the liturgical prayer in which the Father is invoked that He may send the Holy Spirit upon the Eucharistic offerings and transform them. The problem of the epiclesis can be stated thus: which is really consecratory, the words of institution (Christological aspect) or the epiclesis (Pneumatological dimension)? This is a comparatively late problem, which arose in the West in the 14th century as the result of a narrow focusing on the words of consecration, and this in turn was the result of medieval hylemorphic theories (matter and form). This seems to be a pseudo-problem, which can be satisfactorily solved by a determined return to the early tradition. In the first millennium, the climax of the Eucharistic celebration was considered to be the moment of communion. It was to the communion that the entire thrust of the sacrificial memorial was directed. Later on the emphasis shifted from communion to the consecration and this created many difficulties.

The right solution would be to consider the entire Eucharistic Prayer (with the anamnesis and the epiclesis included in it) as consecratory. Thus the word of

institution and the epiclesis would have equal importance in bringing about the transformation of the elements. Thus the essential aspects of memorial, sacrifice and RP would move parallel towards the climax of communion., without isolating the words of institution as productive of the RP. This would strike a perfect balance between the Christological and the Pneumatological dimensions of the mystery.

This broad solution is quite in keeping with the Bible, which often joins the efficacy of the word and that of the Spirit: the creation of the world (Gen 1:2; 6:9), the activity of Moses and the great prophets (Ex 4: 10-17; Is 42:1-4), that of the Messiah (Is 11:1-4), the eschatological life of the people of God (Is 32:15; Ez 36:26ff), are all the simultaneous result of God's creative word and of the action of his Spirit. Furthermore, other theological considerations seem to point in the same direction: the Church is at once the body of Christ and the temple of the Spirit; justification implies immanence in the Risen Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit; eschatological glory is as markedly Christological as it is Pneumatological. Similarly, the entire Eucharistic action embraces inseparably both the aspects; it is the action of Christ (words of institution) and also the action of the Spirit (epiclesis).

Section II: The Effects

1. A unified community

The effect of the Eucharistic celebration is to be understood primarily in relation with the ecclesial community. The individual members of the Church are graced in the Eucharistic celebration as members of the Church. In the NT, St. Paul's theology lays the stress on the social and ecclesial aspect of the Eucharistic reality, i.e., unity of the Church; while the theology of St. John insists on the personal aspect of the sacrament of life. This affirmation must not be made too exclusive, for the difference is only one of emphasis. St. Paul's thought reaches to the unity of the ecclesial body of Christ through the sacramental union of its members with the risen Lord. On the other hand, while Jn 6 concentrates on the personal effect of the sacramental eating of Christ's body, its communal effect is clearly demonstrated in the fourth gospel by the priestly prayer of Christ (Jn 17), the fundamental theme of which is Church unity.

The early liturgical documents unite closely the two aspects, ecclesial and personal, of the Eucharistic reality. The Eucharistic prayer of the *Didache* sees at once in the Eucharist the sacrament of Church unity and of the life in Christ. Thus *Didache* forms an early synthesis of Pauline and Johannine theologies of the Eucharist. In the later liturgical texts, the twofold effect, ecclesial and personal, of the Eucharistic memorial, are closely united in the epicletic prayers. A best example is the liturgy of the Apostolic Tradition.

The theology of the Fathers is very rich in bringing about a synthesis of the personal and ecclesial aspects of the Eucharist. For instance, the texts of Ignatius of Antioch emphasizes that the life of God offered to men through the Eucharistic celebration appears essentially communal. It is possessed by the members of the Church as members of a Christian fellowship in union with God through Christ. The ecclesial communion actualised in the Eucharistic celebration is precisely the sacrament of her members' union with God.

The Fathers of the great period dwell on the double fruit, ecclesial and personal. The sacramental sharing in the body of Christ confers on the recipient, in the

terms of the Greek fathers, incorruptibility and immortality; it is also the pledge of the bodily resurrection. At the same time, the Eucharistic celebration builds up the Church of Christ into a harmonious and unified body. More important still: the two effects of the Eucharistic sacrament are intimately united. Symptomatic of this close relationship is the ease with which the Fathers of the Church pass from the Eucharistic body - principle of life, immortality and incorruptibility- to the ecclesial body - sacrament of our union with God. Among those who bring out more clearly the inter-relationship of the personal and ecclesial aspects, John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria may be singled out among the Greeks and Augustine and Leo among the Latins.

According to Cyril of Alexandria, by eating the flesh of Christ, Christians become united with Him and partake of him really. On the personal level, the Eucharistic sacramental banquet produces therefore, an intimate union and mutual indwelling of Christ and his members. Closely related to this is the union between Christ's members that results from the reception of the Eucharistic sacrament: "By means of his flesh Christ unites all into one body with himself and among themselves".

The emphasis laid by St. Augustine on the Eucharistic sacrament as building up the unity of the Church supposes the union of Christ's members with their head through the worthy reception of the sacrament. Only if they receive correctly Christ's sacramental body, do they become his ecclesial body. On the other hand, lest the Amen with which they receive in faith the sacramental body of Christ be made into a lie, it is necessary that Christians should live as true members of ecclesial community. Thus the faithful become what they receive, provided they receive it worthily.

For the documents of the Church which speak of the effect of the Eucharist, cfr. The Christian Faith, nos. 1501 ff. Important are the Decree for the Armenians and Council of Trent. In Vatican II and in the subsequent documents, heavy emphasis is laid on the Eucharist as sacrament of unity. The unity of God's people is "aptly signified and admirable realized by that most august sacrament" (LG 11). By the sacrament of the Eucharist, "the unity of Christ's Church is both signified and realized" (U.R..2). "No Christian community can be built up unless it has as its basis and pivot the celebration of the holy Eucharist. It is from this therefore that any attempt to form a community must begin" (Instruction, no. 13). "The special effect of this sacrament is the unity of the mystical body" (*Mysterium Fidei*, no. 40).

The Conciliar and post-Conciliar documents do not however overlook the essential unity, which exists between the two effects, ecclesial and personal, of the Eucharistic sacrament; rather, their intimate connection is stressed significantly. Communion of the members with Christ and with each other results inseparably from the Eucharistic celebration: "By really partaking of the Lord's body, in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with him and with one another"(LG no. 7). "The Eucharist both perfectly signifies and wonderfully effects that sharing in God's life and unity of God's people by which the Church exists"(Instruction, no. 12).

Yet the Eucharistic community is by no means a self-centered community closed upon itself. For at the Eucharistic celebration the members of the Body of Christ have been nourished with the sacramental body of Christ who died and rose for the whole of humankind, not only for the restricted circle of his disciples.

Strengthened by the flesh of Christ and cleansed by his blood, the disciples go out into the wide world, there to be witness of Christ's love and service, for they are members of a Church which is not self-centered but world-centered. The Eucharistic community therefore receives a mission to the world, is thrust upon the world, upon all men and women whom it will try to heal, to comfort, to save. Jesus died for all without restriction of caste or creed, and it is this broad, universal outlook that is commemorated at the altar. If the Eucharistic community, after having proclaimed the universality of Christ's salvific love on the cross, were to narrowly turn in upon itself, it would be making a mockery of Christ's avowed intention to shed his blood "for you and for all". The Eucharistic celebration should always echo this world-oriented spirituality and the communicant should be ready and eager to share his Christian life and riches with the tax collectors, prostitutes and sinners of this world—just as Jesus did.

2. Communal Eucharistic Celebration

The manner in which the Eucharistic sacrament is celebrated ought to show forth its nature as sacrament of unity. The social character of the Eucharistic sacrament was deeply felt in the early tradition. This is why the only Eucharistic celebration practised then was the communal celebration at which the bishop (or his delegate) presided. In the early times, the Eucharistic celebration was the liturgical assembly of the local Church. In the liturgical assembly of the Eucharistic celebration, the local Church represented the entire Church concretely present and sacramentally operative.

This perfect expression of unity could not however be maintained. The demands of the pastorate soon required that the number of Eucharistic-centres be increased. As late as 5th century, the Patriarch of Alexandria inquired from Pope Leo the Great whether it was legitimate for a priest to offer the Eucharist for those who had been unable to attend the bishop's Eucharist. The Roman custom of mixing the bread consecrated at the bishop's mass in every Eucharistic celebration was intended to demonstrate the unity of the Eucharistic celebration. This was known in Rome only. The sense of communal celebration remained however strong in all the Churches: in each place, the Eucharist was considered as the visible centre of unity of the local community.

Vatican II has a renewed sense of the local Eucharistic community and of communal celebration. S.C. 26 lays down the general principle: "liturgical celebrations are celebrations of the Church as 'sacrament of unity' in which all must actively participate according to their rank; for the Church is a hierarchical community of persons". S.C. 41 says that the Eucharist presided over by the bishop surrounded by his college of priests and by his ministers and celebrated in common by all, is among all liturgical celebrations the "pre-eminent manifestation of the Church".

Concelebration is rapidly becoming common practice today. We may enunciate: Concelebration is the "eminent manner" of celebrating the Eucharistic mystery, in which the mystery of the Church is best manifested. It shows forth the unity of Christ's sacrifice, of the ministerial priesthood and of the Eucharistic assembly.

The Question of Concelebration

Has Concelebration been a common practice in the early centuries? There is no universal agreement as to the answer to this question. The earliest witness to this practice is that which is found in the Apostolic Constitution, which mentions the celebration of the Eucharist by the whole college of priests. But the college of priests did not say the anaphora; they only laid their hands on the oblation together with the newly ordained bishop. The bishop celebrates alone, since he alone pronounces the words of consecration and indeed the entire anaphora; the sacramental action of the bishop is however accompanied with the ceremonial gesture of the imposition of hands by the college of priests. In silent concelebration the words of institution and the anaphora are said by the principal celebrant alone, while by the gesture of the imposition of hands the con-celebrants mark their union with the sacramental action; in spoken concelebration all recite together the anaphora. The first mode is clearly witnessed by the early documents, while the other is not. However, the silent form of concelebration was truly sacramental. History testifies to the existence in the 8th century of a spoken form of concelebration, though it was preserved only in the rite of priestly ordination. In the East, where silent concelebration remained since the early times widespread practice, the spoken form has been introduced in the 16th century under western influence.

The mind of the Church is that concelebration is the normal way for a community of priests to celebrate. The communal dimension of the Eucharistic mystery itself suggests that in a community of priests and non-priests, a concelebrated mass in which all take their active part ought to become the normal practice. Moreover, concelebration is meant for daily use, not merely for extraordinary circumstances. Nevertheless, every priest retains his right to celebrate privately (S. C. 57). The priest's 'personal preference' or devotion is a sufficient cause to justify private celebration.

Does sacramental concelebration imply so many Masses as there are priests celebrating? It is true that every priest concelebrating sacramentally exercises his priestly power. But it does not however imply that concelebration means a multiplicity of Masses. Masses are multiplied with the multiplication of the Eucharistic sacramental actions; where the symbolic action is one, there is one representation of the paschal mystery. In sacramental concelebration, Christ offers Himself in sacrifice and gives Himself as food through a college of priests, not through one only; there is however, but one sacrificial banquet.

Though essentially collegial, sacramental concelebration is a hierarchical action. To concelebrate is to unite oneself according to one's priestly order to the liturgical action of the main celebrant. The main celebrant celebrates principally, while the con-celebrants do so in union and together with him. He presides over the Eucharistic assembly and leads the college of priests in the celebration. The whole sacerdotal college constitutes with him an organically structured unit positing a common action. Therefore, in order to concelebrate sacramentally, priests need not each say or do personally all that the Eucharistic celebration implies and that which is done and said by each priest in private celebration. For, as principle of unity of the "entire college of priests, the principal celebrant is entitled to act in their name.

Can a priest con-celebrate in the mode of the laity? No. To participate actively, it is claimed, is necessarily to partake according to one's rank and one's function in the Church. Every active participation by a priest is necessarily an exercise of the ministerial priesthood involving sacramental concelebration with the officiating priest. In order to co-consecrate with the main celebrant, the concelebrants will have to manifest - through gestures, priestly vestments, and their position around the altar - their priestly share in the sacramental action.

The Anomaly of the Private Mass

As regards the private and communitarian forms of Eucharistic celebration Vatican II was certainly a turning point, but unfortunately subsequent declarations of the central Magisterium have not always followed the lead of the council. Admittedly, within the totality of the Eucharistic doctrine the question of the private Mass is not a major issue. But on the other hand it is of some spiritual and pastoral consequence for thousands of priests who are often — and in some cases daily — confronted with the triple option of saying private Mass, or joining a concelebrated Mass or saying no Mass at all. Ecumenically too the question is relevant, for the practice of the private Mass seems to be one more typically 'Catholic oddity', unknown to the other Christian Churches, which occasionally still raise an accusing finger at our inveterate practice of saying Mass without a congregation.

a) The case for the defense

The expression 'private Mass' is usually understood today as meaning *Missa solitaria*, namely, the Mass as celebrated by a priest alone, in the absence of a congregation. For Luther and Trent, a Mass was private when nobody received communion at it, except the priest. The determining factor at that time was the absence of Eucharistic communion, rather than the absence of a worshipping congregation. The private Mass has quite recently and authoritatively been defended on the ground that it is an action both of Christ and of the Church. The officiating priest may be alone, but in reality he has the entire Church backing him up, for he is not a private individual performing some private action for his own personal satisfaction; he is rather an official minister of the Church acting in her name and explicitly commissioned by her to perform a public act of worship which is in fact the summit of his priestly life. The Mass — any Mass, even private — is simply an ecclesial action, with its social or communal character deeply branded on it. Hence, properly speaking there is no private Mass.

Nor should one easily forget the "extraordinary spiritual fruit which flows even from the private Mass, not only for the celebrant himself, but also for the entire Church, for physical presence is certainly not required in order to receive in abundance the salutary effects of the eucharistic memorial. Especially when the celebrant is faced with the option of saying either private Mass or no Mass at all, this legitimate consideration of the fruit that accrues to himself and to so many others may eventually tilt the balance in favour of the private Mass. If a private form of celebration were a real deviation from the original Eucharist, the Holy Spirit would not have permitted it to last for so long. Even mere length of time seems to be a seal of authenticity, a guarantee of divine approval.

In recent times Pope Paul VI has been even more articulate than Trent (CF 1552):

We should also mention the public and social nature of every Mass, a conclusion that clearly follows from the doctrine we have been discussing. For even though a priest should offer Mass in private, that Mass is not something private: it is an act of Christ and of the Church. In offering this sacrifice, the Church learns to offer herself as a sacrifice for all. Moreover, for the salvation of the entire world she applies the single, boundless redemptive power of the sacrifice of the cross. Hence... that Mass is to be fully approved which, in conformity with the prescriptions and lawful traditions of the Church, a priest for a sufficient reason offers in private, that is, in the presence of no one except his server. From such a Mass an abundant treasure of special salutary graces enriches the celebrant, the faithful, the whole Church and the entire world — graces which are not imparted in the same abundance by the mere reception of holy communion.

Even more authoritatively than the recent Popes, Vatican II takes up the defense of the practice by making use of the same arguments (PO 13)

b) The case for the prosecution

There are absolutely no traces in Scripture of any private celebration. The institution itself was obviously communal, with Jesus and the Twelve as a miniature Church around him. And it could hardly have been otherwise, given the explicit Jewish liturgical prohibition to celebrate the Passover individually. Either a minimum of ten persons gather together for the joyful celebration or there will be no celebration at all. The communal dimension originates in the Egyptian deliverance, flows into its liturgical commemoration at the Passover and envelops the early Christian Eucharist. Within this social, communal mentality, the private celebration of the Eucharist is simply unthinkable.

It is not only the New Testament, but also the first six centuries after Jesus that are entirely silent about any form of private Eucharistic celebration. All through the first half of the first millennium the Church, faithful to the spirit of the New Testament, celebrates the Eucharist always in a communal setting, often at home in small groups. The practice makes the first timid appearance at the end of the sixth century, but the really turning point seems to have been the Roman synod of 610 under Pope Boniface IV, which sanctioned the ordination of monks.

The private Mass is then a medieval institution, but even more damaging than its fairly late arrival are the dubious reasons that led to its appearance: the multiplication of votive Masses, all said for a stipend; the penitential exchange in the form of Masses, that is, the sacramental penance imposed by the Church which was then exchanged for a certain number of Masses; the partial confusion between the monastic and the priestly vocations, once the monks were ordained priests; the number of priests, far in excess of the pastoral needs of the faithful; the overstress on the cultic nature of the priesthood, to the detriment of other priestly functions of equal or even greater importance, like the proclamation of the word; a noticeable shift of emphasis from the objective, communal nature of the celebration to the subjective, personal devotion of the celebrant.

In the year 829 the French bishops send an official report to the Emperor in which the reasons for their prohibition of private Masses are fully explained:

It has seemed proper to us to forbid that any priest should say Mass alone, because this is in keeping neither with the words of Our Lord by which he committed to his disciples the celebration of the mystery of his body and blood, nor with the writings of St Paul. And it is not found in the Acts of the Apostles if they are read

carefully, that one should proceed this way. Therefore, it seems to us that such a solitary consecrator of the body and blood of the Lord should be called upon and asked to whom he says 'the Lord be with you' and from whom he receives the answer 'and also with you', and for whom he prays to the Lord when he says, 'remember Lord, those around this altar,' since there is no one around. This custom, which is opposed to apostolic and ecclesiastical authority and seems to show disrespect for such a great mystery, should hereafter be discontinued. This is our common decision.

The medieval bishops never appeal to the social nature of every Mass, branded into its very structure whether the faithful be present or absent. These 'mystical' reasons to be propounded by the later Magisterium apparently never occurred to them. They were confirmed realists: if the people are not physically present the Mass may not be celebrated.

Vatican II is much more reserved than Trent in its approval — or shall we say, reluctant tolerance - of private Masses. It is true that the Council specifically grants to every priest the right to celebrate privately, but it also acknowledges that this is not the ideal form of celebration: "It is to be stressed that whenever rites, according to their specific nature, make provision for communal celebration involving the presence and active participation of the faithful, this way of celebrating them is to be preferred, as far as possible, to a celebration that is individual and quasi-private."

How come that the Holy Spirit has inspired only us to introduce and generalize the private celebration while leaving all other Christians in ignorance of the blessings involved in such a practice? For this is one of the doctrinal areas in which the Catholic Church seems to be entirely isolated from the rest of Christendom. No priest, minister or pastor of any other Church would even approve of the possibility of a solitary Eucharistic celebration. And it is not that they lack a due appreciation of the doctrinal and spiritual wealth contained in the Eucharist. Especially the Orthodox proclaim, loud and clear, their profound attachment to the Divine Liturgy, and yet will never dream of celebrating the mysteries in the absence of the faithful.

3. The cleansing power of the Eucharist

If sin, biblically considered, is the willful rejection by man of a loving communion with God, then the intimacy of Eucharistic communion is just the opposite of sin. The Church may be the pure bride of the Lamb but she is also and unavoidably sinful and consequently in need of constant purification. Traditionally, when a Catholic is conscious of a grievous sin, he or she instinctively turns to the sacrament of reconciliation in order to regain the state of friendship with God. But is this the only way to be again reconciled with God?

In this domain the Church is heir to two distinct traditions, both genuine and equally solid, but not easily reconcilable. One of them - and this is the traditional line taken by nearly all Catholic catechisms - stresses that when conscious of mortal sin, the believer must have recourse to the sacrament of reconciliation before approaching the eucharistic table. Yet we should remember that this traditional Catholic position is only one way, but not the only way, to solve the problem under discussion. Besides this venerable solution, certainly ancient and widespread, there is yet another way to look at the relationship between the Eucharist and sin. According to this other conception, a person conscious of mortal sin is reconciled to God, not through the sacrament of reconciliation before communion, but rather by receiving communion

directly with a contrite heart. Then purification from sin would no longer be the necessary prerequisite for communion but rather the effect of sacramental communion. In other words, this second trend relies heavily on the cleansing power of the Eucharist.

It is the Eucharist, especially the precious blood of Jesus that cleanses the contrite sinner and washes away his sin. The ancient Oriental liturgies emphasize strongly this cleansing power of the Eucharist both sacrificially and sacramentally. This is probably to be explained through an imperceptible overlapping of penitential and Eucharistic services, for in those early centuries the Church used to exercise the power of the keys within the framework of the Eucharistic celebration. Some of these eastern liturgies assert emphatically that the Eucharist can remit all sins — except the 'big three' (apostasy, adultery, and murder), which, because of their intrinsic gravity and implied malice, required that they be explicitly submitted to the Church's reconciling power. Apart from these three particularly grievous faults, all other sins, even those that, on account of their grave matter, we would consider mortal today, were apparently forgiven by means of the Eucharist. Whereas sins that implied not only weakness, but also real malice, would require a direct submission to the power of the keys.

This typically Oriental solution to the problem, so widespread in the entire first millennium, obviously relies heavily on the cleansing power of the Eucharist, especially the purifying value of the Eucharistic blood, which in those early centuries the faithful always drank from the cup. It was the blood of Jesus that washed away their sins. After drinking from the chalice they felt cleansed, purified, reconciled with God. Yet this did not imply a sort of mechanical cleansing power of the Eucharist, as if Eucharistic communion could purify them regardless of their subjective dispositions. Nothing of the sort. Internal repentance and subjective reconciliation with God were absolutely necessary, for the cleansing efficacy of the Eucharist presupposes as an indispensable condition the living faith and the repentant heart of the communicant. It is obvious that a new infusion of Trinitarian life, a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit must necessarily have as a consequence a cleansing effect. Thomas Aquinas stated categorically long ago: "Considered in itself, this sacrament (of the Eucharist) has the power to remit all sins, and derives this power from the passion of Christ, which is the source and cause of the remission of sins" (ST III, 79:3).

Despite its extraordinary purifying value, the Eucharist was not instituted specifically for the forgiveness of sin. It is only the sacrament of reconciliation, not that of the Eucharist, Jesus gave that to the Church for this purpose. The Jewish Passover sacrifice, which is the immediate predecessor of the Last Supper, was not considered to be a sacrifice of expiation for sin. The absolutely amazing thing is that both these conceptions are found in the Council of Trent, respectively in the 13th session (1551) and in the 22nd (1562).

Communion under both species

All throughout the first millennium and until well into the second, communion under both kinds was the common, unquestionable practice, and only exceptionally was the Eucharist administered under one kind only: under the form of bread for those who, unable to attend the celebration, communicated at home; for the sick, prisoners and anchorites; and under the form of wine for infants and those gravely ill. In

connection with the Eucharistic cult, the height of the Middle Ages (11th and 12th centuries) was a turning point as far as Eucharistic theology is concerned. It is then that the integral presence of the whole Christ, under each one of the species was explicitly taught and, as a consequence, communion under one kind, which up to that moment had been the exception, gradually became the general rule. Other reasons for the momentous change implied in the withdrawal of the cup from the laity were rather of a pastoral nature: danger of spilling the blood, danger of contagion in time of pestilence, hygienic reasons of cleanliness, repugnance of some to drink from a common chalice, etc.

The practice of administering communion to the faithful under both kinds continued, however, well into the 15th century (at least at papal Masses). In fact, it lasted almost until the eve of the Reformation, and its total suppression may have had certain undefined anti-Protestant overtones. At present, the liberal opening of Vatican II has fortunately been kept and even extended by the new Code of Canon Law which came into force in 1983 (Canon 925).

More important, however, than to know the history of communion under both kinds is to have a clear understanding of the undeniable advantages, both spiritual and theological, of such a practice. Are we to receive communion under both kinds merely because it has recently become fashionable? Simply because "it gives me devotion to drink the blood of Jesus?" The reasons that justify the practice are certainly a little more solid than that.

Fidelity to the records of the institution seems to demand it, for the New Testament ought always to retain its normative value. Jesus gave us not only bread, but bread and wine, and in addressing the Twelve he was addressing the entire Church of the future: "Drink of it, all of you" (Mt 26,27). Hence, in view of Jesus' explicit command, it is not the giving of the chalice to the laity, but rather its refusal that needs justification. The Church, it is true, enjoys ample freedom in the matter and she has the power and authority to regulate her sacramental life as she sees fit; yet the records of the institution, as the embodiment of Jesus' explicit intention, ought to be a constant reminder to her that communion only under the form of bread should be the exception, not the rule: and communion under both kinds for all should be the rule, not the exception. We should not forget that for more than a thousand years it was customary to give the chalice to the laity.

The immediate background to the institution too demanded both eating and drinking. We have seen above that at the Last Supper Jesus celebrated both a covenant sacrifice, reminiscent of the Sinaitic covenant, and a Passover sacrifice, commemorative of the Egyptian deliverance. And both these sacrifices included eating and drinking. After making the original covenant by means of blood, Moses and the seventy elders "ate and drank" (Ex 24,11). Similarly at the Jewish Passover banquet not only one but three times did the cup, filled with wine and water, go round to the participants. Coming from such a religious background, it was almost unavoidable that Jesus should have commanded to his followers the sacramental use of bread and wine.

The meal aspect of the celebration is better expressed by eating and drinking than by either eating or drinking. It is true that, absolutely speaking, the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist is sufficiently well manifested by either of the two species taken separately. Bread and wine are not incomplete twin concepts needing one as the

compliment of the other so as to express jointly the sacrificial nature, which each one of them would not otherwise convey. Each of the species, provided it is taken together with its corresponding verbal formula, is sufficiently evocative of the sacrificial character of the Eucharist. All this is quite correct if we consider the Eucharist as sacrifice. But when viewed as sacrament and a banquet of eternal life, it seems to demand not just one but both the species, for usually no banquet is celebrated with only food or only drink. A banquet seems to require both. Hence in this Jesus seems to have followed ordinary human usage.

The ecumenical value of communion under both kinds is obvious. For too long the refusal to grant the chalice to the laity has been another typically Catholic oddity practiced only by us and by nobody else. After the time of the Reformation and given the loud demand of the chalice for the laity by the early Protestants, the continued restriction of communion to just the form of bread for lay persons might have had certain subtle anti-Protestant undertones which should now be corrected. There is no valid reason why in this pastoral matter which does not touch the substance of the eucharistic faith the Catholic Church should stand so severely alone, so isolated from all other Christian Churches.

But to claim that *a greater spiritual fruit* is derived by receiving communion under both kinds remains very doubtful and debatable. This point was hotly debated at the Council of Trent but at the end the Council wisely refused to settle the dispute by favouring any of the two conflicting opinions. In favour of the greater fruit, however, it could perhaps be mentioned that when bread and wine are given, the sign value is fuller, the symbolism richer; and since, on the other hand, the fruit or efficacy of the sacrament is closely bound up with its sign value, a richer symbolism seems to imply a richer effect. Yet the decisive reason in favour of communion under both kinds should be, not an uncertain richer spiritual profit, but rather fidelity to the intention of Christ as recorded in the New Testament.

THE SACRAMENTAL MEAL

From the time of the Reformation until quite recently, Catholic theology was somewhat reluctant to think of the whole Eucharist as a meal; at most it would admit that one aspect of it could be called a meal. There seemed to be a fear that the idea of Eucharist as meal led inevitably to the Protestant view of the sacrament as a non-sacrificial Holy Communion service. Present-day sacramental theology ought to be able to speak about the Eucharist as a meal without generating such fears. The Eucharist is a meal in the sacramental sense, as Baptism is a bathing in the sacramental sense. It is a reality (body and blood of Christ, sacrifice, communion, viaticum, thanksgiving . . .) that is contained, conveyed, acted out, symbolized in and by a meal. The meal is the sign, not the reality. It is not just the bread and wine that are signs in the Eucharist but the bread and wine given and taken in a meal. The host of the meal is as much part of the sign as the food he gives, and the guests who receive the food contribute to its significance. There would be no Eucharist without an ordained minister to represent Christ in his role of host who gives himself as food and without some believing people (at the very least the minister himself) to eat and drink the food that is prepared and given.

To give a meal to people is to give them life. Any giving of food is recognized as life sustaining. The first drops of mother's milk given to a child and accepted by it are an effective sign of the mother's desire to keep the new born child alive and of the child's ability to go on living: one cannot be sure that a new-born child has a hold on life until it begins to take food. It is in this sense that the Eucharist enters into the sacramentality of Christian initiation. As the first giving and taking of food it is a sign that initiation into the life process is really complete. To continue giving food is to make life continue and grow. To give it in a meal is to give life in its distinctively human dimension.

Taking a meal is more than just taking food. Humans cultivate food and prepare it, as well as just gathering it: it is 'fruit of the earth and work of human hands'. They prepare it together and give it to one another. To prepare food and invite someone to come and sit down at one's table is to express one's intention of being life-giving for them in a distinctively human way: it is to offer them food of the body but also of the spirit in the form of companionship and conversation; it is to be ready to draw life from them in return. To make the meal a festive one is to express the joy of host and participants in some shared life-experience, and in doing so to intensify their shared life. Meals are taken to remember people and events that have contributed to the life of those who eat and drink together. A special kind of food associated with the person or event being remembered may be used to reinforce the remembering. Meals are an occasion for remembering God the life-giver when food is recognized as his gift. People pray at meals and express their awareness that all life comes from God.

Sacrament of the gift of eternal life

What the Eucharistic meal ritualizes is God's giving of eternal life to his People and their receiving of it. The first Eucharist that is received as part of initiation manifests and ensures that the initiate has a stable hold on eternal life and is ready for nourishment and growth towards the full enjoyment of it. When people continue to take part in the Eucharist in a regular rhythm, what is being sacramentalised is God's continuing care to maintain the life he has given and bring it to fullness, and their own acceptance of that growth. Every Eucharist, but particularly that which is received as a preparation for death, is a *viaticum* sacramentalizing the fact that eternal life cannot be enjoyed in its fullness by those who live in time, so that what manifests and nourishes it on earth is always a looking forward to its fullness in heaven.

In sacramentalizing God's giving of eternal life and human reception of it, the Eucharist sacramentalizes Christ: he is the full, definitive giving of divine life to humanity and its perfect reception by humanity. It sacramentalizes Christ in his resurrection, by which his body was made fully alive and life giving by God. It does so by sacramentalizing him in the death by which he gave his earthly life in witness to his acceptance that eternal life comes only from the God who is his Father: it was because of the way he died that he became totally open to receive that life from his Father at the resurrection. In sacramentalizing the Father's gift of life through, with and in Christ, the Eucharist sacramentalizes the Holy Spirit, who is given from the risen Lord as the transforming pledge of eternal life in the midst of the world. It is as a Spirit-filled meal that the Eucharist does its sacramentalizing.

The meal serves as a symbolic way of remembering Christ in his death and resurrection. It can do so because of what the Christian story tells about the meals Jesus shared with his disciples, after his resurrection as well as during his earthly life,

and particularly about the solemn way he shared a Passover meal with them just before he went to his death. The Eucharist is a meal of bread and wine. The bread and wine are prayed over, broken and distributed by the one who presides and acts as host at the meal, just as Jesus did at the Last Supper. He says the same words that Jesus said about the bread and wine: 'this is my body. . . my blood'. These words define how Jesus is being remembered in the Eucharist. He is being remembered in his body and blood. That means he is being remembered as a person of flesh and blood, real and alive, as he was at the Last Supper and as he showed himself to his disciples after the resurrection. Jesus is being remembered as offering himself in sacrifice on the cross for the salvation of the new covenant People. It is being recognized that it was in so offering himself in sacrifice that he became life giving in his body and blood at the resurrection.

The Sacrament of the Risen Lord

The profound theological renewal that swept throughout the Church as a consequence of Vatican II has left a deep imprint on the understanding of the sacraments. The emphasis has shifted from the objective factors in the sacrament to the persons for whose sake the sacrament is effected. To continue speaking today of the 'matter and form' of the sacraments sounds outdated. This way of expressing the sacramental reality has prevailed for centuries in the Catholic Church under the influence of Scholastic theology. But apart from clarity and intellectual precision, this conception does not have much to commend itself. By advocating a change in perspectives, a welcome shift to the personalist and subjective aspects, the objective factors are certainly not denied. They are rather put in a better perspective to ensure them from abuse and avoid unnecessary ecumenical misunderstandings.

When one talks theologically about sacraments one is bringing into play everything that one knows about God and his plan for the universe, and about the meaning of human life and history. Sacraments are, in fact, the final events in the historical working-out of the relationship between God and humans — the economy of salvation —, which is the overall subject of systematic theology. There is a theology of sacraments current in the Church today, which has the great merit of situating itself within a deep analysis of the mystery of God and his relationship with the entire creation and its history, which uses a Trinitarian Christology that is at the same time deeply sensitive to the humanness of Jesus, and which employs an ecclesiology which sees the community of believers both as gathered together by the grace of Christ and the Spirit and at the same time as mediating that grace to all those who are being saved. It uses the word sacrament on each of these three levels of analysis — theological, Christological, ecclesiological — taking advantage of its analogical elasticity to show how they interpenetrate without confusing them: *Christ is the Sacrament of God, the Church is the Sacrament of Christ, and the seven sacraments are different actualizations of the basic sacramentality of the Church.* Such a systematic understanding of sacramentality uncovers the deep roots of the unity of the sacramental economy and lets one see each individual sacrament in relation to all the others and to the entire economy.

Christ, The Sacrament Of God

In very general terms sacramentality refers to any manifestation in a sign of the mystery of God's life — the giving of it by God and the receiving of it by humans. It denotes the simultaneous manifestation and realization of the gift of God; the telling

of it that is also the doing of it, the invitation to divine life that has already within it the response. It occurs most perfectly in Christ. He is the Word of God made flesh, who does not just speak for God but is God; he is and does what he says. He is also the perfect human response to God, his Father: he accepts the design of God in obedience and does what he is told to do. He preached the message of salvation from God and gave his life for it on the cross. When God approved him by raising him from the dead he became in his body the full human manifestation of divine life and the perfect possessor of it. He lives to make intercession for us, expressing and making his own our need and desire for salvation. At the same time he is the giver of the gift of God because he is established in power with the Father as the sender of the Spirit. He is, for all these reasons, the primordial Sacrament of God.

As soon as one says that Christ is the Sacrament of God one is already bound to say that all other sacramentality is derived from him and draws its power from him. During his life on earth he gathered around him people who would always remember him, and in that remembering carry his salvation throughout time and place. He gave his disciples words and rituals for remembering. When he made his death on the cross to be the expression of his total dedication to the Father he also made the ritual memorials of his death, which would be celebrated by his disciples, to be expressions of his dedication. He adopted them as expressions of his wish to make his death salvific for all those who would remember him in faith. Christ carried this human decision about his death and about every ritual remembering of it into the timelessness of his glorification, it is what allows him to be personally present to every ritual celebration that those who believe in him do in memory of him. In that personal presence his humanness is the instrument of the divine act that gives salvation.

The Church, Sacrament of Christ

The memory of the risen Christ is kept alive, by word and rite, in the community of believers founded on his apostles. In the rites they identify their own story with the story of Christ and their own life-experience with his. Those who look at such a community can hear and see Christ in the lives of its members, and specifically in their words that speak about him and their rites that celebrate him; and they can feel the power of his person. This community shares the prophetic, priestly and kingly roles that Christ fulfils in his own person for the salvation of the world. That is why it can be called the Sacrament of Christ. In this community Christ is both received and given in a visible way, as befits a sacrament. The Church is both the gathered community of the saved and the gathering community of those who bring salvation ('the Church. . . in its entirety is at the same time both community of the redeemed and the redeeming institution': Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament. . .*, p. 58; see Congar, *The Mystery of the Church*, pp. 110 ff.). The receiving is the most important and lasting reality of the Church as sacrament, but the giving has a certain logical priority.

The community goes out to seek its members. The giving of Christ in the Church is made possible by a series of ministries, both of the prophetic and of the priestly kind, which carry an authority that comes from the kingly power of Christ. All members of the Church are authorized to do the giving in some form or other. Through Baptism and Confirmation they have a special relationship with Christ that qualifies them to act and be seen to act in his name. Some ministries are reserved to

the ordained and the community can only be recognized as the body of Christ when it enjoys the special conformity to Christ that the ordained bring to it. But ultimately it is the receiving of grace that builds up the community in the likeness of Christ. Without the receiving the Church would not be the body of Christ. It would not be his Sacrament. The giving will end when he comes again, but the receiving will last forever. The ministerial Church, with its equipment of sacramental characters and prophetic gifts and pastoral powers, is for the time of waiting; the grace-filled Church, united by and in love, is forever.

Nevertheless, the sacramentality of the Church is consistent with a certain independence of the giving of grace from its receiving. While the objective containing and showing-forth of the grace of Christ that is really being lived by people is the full sacramentality of the Church, the ability to go on doing that even when the lives of individual members of the Church, and particularly those called to be ministers of word and rite, are not fully Christian is an indispensable feature of it. During the time of waiting for the final coming of Christ members of the Church may be unfaithful to his grace. But because Christ has brought them into a special relationship with himself when he called them to be prophets, priests and kings in his Church, and to some specific ministries in it, they can go on acting in his name even when they are not living in his grace. His fidelity to his choice is stronger than the vacillations of those he has chosen. Contemporary theology uses some ideas taken from the traditional theology of the sacramental character, and its distinction from sacramental grace, to express this feature of the Church in sacramental terms. It is not just in the performance of its rites but in its entire prophetic, priestly and kingly life that the Church is recognized as having a power to make Christ present and visible that can function even when those who are exercising it are not fully living in Christ. In such a theology the objective reliability of individual sacraments and their independence of the holiness of the minister can be seen as a particular instance of something that is part of the very nature of the Church.

The effect of the sacrament is the work of the risen Christ acting in the Christian through the Holy Spirit. It is a work of sanctification effective in the present that rests on the past salvific action of Christ and draws the Church into the future. In a certain way, all three historical dimensions – past, present and future – are concentrated in the sacrament. It is the risen Christ that gradually draws the Church forward to her final consummation, to the fullness of her eschatological glory – through the sacraments.

Holy Spirit and the Sacraments

The Church is nothing else than the visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the world. According to Karl Rahner, the Church is nothing else than the further projection of the historicity and of the visibility of Jesus through space and time. Every one of her sacramental signs is part of the work of Christ with which the Holy Spirit has united itself indissolubly since the day on which the *Logos* became flesh. The Spirit who is present always and everywhere had never become ‘visible’. In the fullness of time, the Spirit has achieved a visible mode in the incarnate *Logos* and in his Body, the Church and to each individual it is ‘visibly’ present in the sacraments. The sacramental sign is the ‘here and now’ of the Pentecost. Hence, it is evident that it is the Spirit who is active, who is the efficient cause in the sacraments.

Some practical questions

1. Are Masses for the dead still meaningful?

Yes, they are, and this practice can be justified as a legitimate development of the rich potentialities contained in the Eucharistic memorial. This memorial has two essential dimensions – thanksgiving and supplication. Both taken together constitute the core of the sacrificial memorial. Hence, the Church from the earliest times applied the power of the Eucharist to the needs of the faithful. She entreated God in the midst of the Eucharistic celebration to heed her supplication and grant her requests for the multifarious needs of man. On the other hand, it matters little whether the person for whom the Church prays be alive or dead. From the very beginning, the Church has always been keenly aware that her members make up a great ‘communion of saints’.

2. Who offers the Eucharist?

It is not the priest alone, but in a certain way the entire congregation or worshipping community that offers the memorial sacrifice of Christ to the Father. The Church offers something, and in the course of the Eucharistic action this something will become Somebody to be returned to her. The Father willingly accepts the symbolic self-offering of the Church by means of bread and wine and as a sign of his acceptance he will return to her those very gifts transformed into the person of his Son. Undoubtedly the origin of the sacrifice lies in Christ, but now it is the offering of the Church. Every Mass is offered in the name of the whole Church, for the officiating priest is never acting in an individual capacity, but rather as an ecclesial minister, officially commissioned by the Church. But the active participation of the faithful should not be overstressed to the point of creating a confusion of roles. Both the presiding priest and the rest of the faithful have essential roles to play at the celebration, but these roles remain distinct and are not certainly interchangeable. The priest officially represents Christ because he alone has been officially commissioned by the Church to act in her name. The priest is not higher than the faithful; he is simply distinct from them. And no amount of ‘brotherhood’ and ‘solidarity’ will be able to wipe out this essential difference between the priest and the faithful.

3. The Eucharistic Cult

The Eucharistic cult has a long history, but not as long as some people imagine. In spite of the lack of explicit biblical support, the Church from the very beginning tacitly believed in Christ’s permanent, continual real presence even beyond the liturgical celebration. In *Mysterium Fidei* (1965), Paul VI refers to three historical periods, which help us to understand the development of the practice. These three successive periods are characterised respectively by the institution of the sacrament; its reservation for the sake of communion; and the adoration of the Eucharist. In the first period, there is only institution and communion, of adoration of any kind; there is no cult of the Eucharist in any form, either public or private. The second period, from mid-second century till the end of the 11th century, is characterised by the reservation of the sacrament, but exclusively for the sake of communion. The scriptural orientation towards communion is well kept, without the admixture of any extraneous element. In the third historical period, due to a variety of historical reasons and partly as a reaction against the first serious Eucharistic heresy, there is a shift of emphasis. The dynamic character of the Eucharistic action is lost and the cult becomes

somewhat static. The faithful no longer take active part in the central sacrificial memorial by receiving communion, but are rather satisfied with looking at the consecrated host. In order to satisfy this kind of 'visual hunger' of the faithful and dispel all possible doubts regarding the doctrine of the real presence, the Church not only emphasises this fundamental belief, but also determines the moment of consecration as the time when the real presence begins. And so the bread and the cup begin to be raised immediately after the consecration (in Paris around the year 1200). The evolution continues unabated. Canterbury, in England, witnesses on Palm Sunday, 1089, the first recorded instance of a Eucharistic procession. Scarcely two centuries later Pope Urban IV, in 1264, institutes the feast of Corpus Christi. In close connection with this feast, the practice of Eucharistic benediction starts. Expositions of the sacrament multiply considerably in the 17th century, when the custom of the 'forty hours adoration' is introduced. A little later, and largely as an offshoot of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, the popular custom of the 'holy hour' is introduced. The latest arrival in this numerous Eucharistic practices and devotions is the Eucharistic congress, started in Lille, France as late as 1881.

4. The Eucharist and non-Christians

Undoubtedly the Eucharistic memorial may be offered for them, for absolutely no human being is excluded from the all-embracing concern of God's love. But the ecclesial body and the Eucharistic body are so closely connected that the exclusion from the former necessarily implies exclusion from the latter too. It is just not possible to eat the body of Christ without belonging to the Body of Christ.